United Nations S/PV.7450

Security Council

Seventieth year *Provisional*

7450th meeting

Wednesday, 27 May 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Linkevičius	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Spain	Mr. Ybañez
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The protection of journalists in conflict situations

Letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/307)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

15-15263 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The protection of journalists in conflict situations

Letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/307)

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, ministers and other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Christophe Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders, and Ms. Mariane Pearl.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/307, which contains a letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, and I give him the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. This issue is fundamentally about the right to information, protection of civilians, respect for human rights and not giving in to threats and intimidation from those who advocate and practice violence and intolerance.

In recent years, we have seen a deeply troubling rise in the number of journalists killed in conflict situations. Of the 593 cases of killings of journalists between 2006 and 2013, almost half — 273 — occurred in conflicts zones. Journalists are also being increasingly targeted and subjected to threats by criminal or terrorist groups, with the blatant intention of silencing them. Recent killings of journalists have been given extensive and welcome attention around the world. We recall, for instance, the brutal murders of Western media representatives in Syria. Yet, we must not forget that around 95 per cent of the killings of journalists in armed conflict concern locally based journalists, with far less media coverage. The Security Council and the Human Rights Council have been presented with findings that illustrate the extent of the problem from South Sudan to Libya, from Syria to Somalia and beyond.

Against the background of this sobering reality, it is not surprising that countries facing armed conflict and a breakdown of the rule of law are ranked at the bottom of the very important annual World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders. Here, I want to commend Director-General Deloire and Reporters Without Borders for their work. We know that armed conflict not only endangers the life and safety of journalists; it also limits the free flow of information, eroding the rule of law and democracy.

We should recall that conflict can easily be exacerbated in an environment that stifles freedom of expression. Conflict and insecure environments must never be a pretext for silencing journalists; on the contrary, it is precisely in these situations where the voices of the voiceless and reports from the front lines must be heard loud and clear.

Ensuring the safety of journalists requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. The challenges for journalists reporting from an armed conflict situation may not be the same as for those who are engaged in other forms of reporting. Women journalists may face challenges different from their male colleagues. The security situation of foreign correspondents may differ from those of locally based journalists. Furthermore, corruption, intimidation, reprisals and weak judicial systems, all of which contribute to impunity, must be seriously tackled if we are to deal with the roots of the problem. The same goes for the basic need for a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Let us also remember that the safety of journalists is of concern in non-conflict zones as well. Ensuring their protection and their work can be of the essence if we are to prevent conflict and human rights violations in threatening situations. As we know, threats and attacks are committed by State and non-State actors alike, often to silence journalists seeking information or opinions on subjects perceived to be off-limits, such as human rights violations, political repression or drug trafficking, to name a few. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity aims to help tackle these challenges. The Plan is being piloted and laid out in several countries, including Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan and South Sudan.

Members of the Security Council have a critical role in advancing this agenda. Let me briefly and in closing point to five ways in which they can do so.

First, they can unequivocally and consistently condemn the killing of journalists in conflict situations. Secondly, they can continue to hold regular debates on the protection of journalists. I encourage them to continue to hear the views of journalists, affected family members such as Ms. Pearl here today, civil society representatives and relevant United Nations and regional mandate-holders. Thirdly, they can encourage Security Council-authorized missions to also look into the safety of journalists and media workers as part of protection of civilians mandates, and report back to the Security Council on their findings. Fourthly, they can encourage Security Council-authorized missions to ensure that freedom of expression and the safety of journalists are integral parts of human rights and justice reforms. Fifthly and lastly, they can endorse and support the United Nations Plan of Action. Occasions such as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists — which falls on 2 November every year — can also be better utilized to draw attention to these problems.

The United Nations system will continue to assist the Security Council in all these efforts by bringing to its attention situations of concern in this area in a timely and proactive manner. It is our shared responsibility to protect the voices that alert, warn and inform on situations threatening international peace and security.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Deloire.

Mr. Deloire (*spoke in French*): Not everyone knows the name of Raad Mohammed al-Azzawi. In the autumn of 2014, that 36-year father was kidnapped in Samarra, a town in the province of Salahedine in Iraq, a few kilometres from the city of Tikrit. He worked as a cameraman for a television channel. While he was held hostage, the jihadist Islamic State group threatened to behead him because he refused to cooperate. Raad Mohammed al-Azzawi was murdered in public in Samarra on 10 October 2014, alongside his brother and two other civilians. This heinous murder has received less coverage than others, but each time the blood flows, be it that of James Foley, Kenji Goto or another journalist, it is the same horror.

Raad Mohammed al-Azzawi was one of 66 journalists killed last year in the exercise or on account of their duties. Another 25 have died since the beginning of the year, including five in the Sudan, two in Iraq, two in Yemen, two in Ukraine and one in Syria. Beyond the human tragedy for the victims and their families — tragedies that repulse the heart — there are additional risks for those who suffer horrors, sometimes in private, without witnesses. Let us not forget that these are stories that have led to the establishment of such legal protections as the Geneva Conventions.

On behalf of Reporters Without Borders, an organization that champions and promotes press freedom, I thank the Security Council for meeting today on the essential topic of the protection of journalists. I welcome the excellent work carried out by the Lithuanian presidency. This is a historic day for the protection of journalists and, we hope, for the freedom of the press as a whole.

The draft text on which the Council will vote and, I hope, adopt refers to the right to freedom of expression as provided for by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is, I believe, a historic moment in which the Security Council shall for the first time link the right to freedom of expression to the need to protect journalists, even if that may a priori obvious. It is not a matter of protecting a corporation, much less of guaranteeing the privileges for a category of civilians, as if all the civilians were not of equal dignity. This is about defending a right of all — the freedom of the press, "the freedom that allows you to verify the existence of all the other freedoms", in the words of the famous Burmese journalist Win Tin, who spent 19 years of his life in detention. The statement that the work of free, independent and impartial media constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society, and can therefore contribute to the protection of civilians also deserves to be welcomed.

As Council members know, resolution 1738 (2006) was, unfortunately, not enough to solve the problem of the insecurity of journalists. No matter how outstanding it may be, it is not certain that a new resolution will suffice, either. It is clear that the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council are working assiduously to protect journalists by deepening international law and adopting the Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. But in 10 years, more than 700 journalists have been killed in the line of duty or because of their work. Each time, we have tried to avoid reality. How many crimes against journalists must there be before United Nations resolutions are finally implemented?

Reporters Without Borders asks the the Council to establish an effective monitoring mechanism on implementation. We ask that the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the protection of journalists be established, with the responsibility for ensuring follow-up and monitoring paper of compliance by Member States with the obligations imposed by resolution 1738 (2006) and an eventual new resolution. The mandate could be established along the lines of that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. The setting up of such a mechanism will have the advantage of putting in place a permanent structure at the heart of the United Nations system.

Appointed and mandated by the Secretary-General, the Special Representative would have the task of collecting all the relevant information, in particular within the United Nations system, concerning violations against the safety and security of journalists in armed conflicts. The office would serve as an early-warning mechanism for the Secretary-General and, through him, for the Security Council. He would liaise with the United Nations system on activities for preventing attacks against journalists in armed conflicts and strive to enhance the United Nations capacity to analyse and manage all information relating to such crimes. And he would undertake investigations, in a complementary role, in situations in which no investigation was opened by the Member State in which occurred an act of violence against a journalist, a media professional or associated personnel. The eventual possibility of individual referrals to the Special Representative by professional and amateur journalists victims of abuse could be considered.

As the Deputy Secretary-General mentioned, today more than 90 per cent of crimes against journalists remain forever unpunished and even go unprosecuted. Such a degree of impunity serves as encouragement to those who commit crimes against journalists.

Reporters Without Borders expresses its satisfaction at the inclusion of the draft resolution that will be voted on today of an obligation to report on the safety of journalists in the context of peacekeeping operations. We believe that the United Nations can also expedite genuine investigations. For example — unfortunately, a tragic one — on 29 April 2015, the Libyan Government in Tobruk announced the murder of seven journalists, including four Libyans, two Tunisians and an Egyptian, who had disappeared at the end of 2014. According to the official announcement, that information was based on statements by suspects recently arrested by the authorities. Reporters Without Borders believes that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Libya should establish an independent investigation to shed light on the murder of those journalists.

We are very pleased that the new draft resolution mentions the role of the International Criminal Court in the prosecution and trial of the perpetrators of war crimes. As said here during an Arria Formula meeting by Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, attacks against journalists not only constitute a grave breach of the

Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocol 1, but fall under war crimes under article 8 of the Rome Statute, which established the Court. She also said that the Court would not hesitate to investigate crimes in the context of its current investigations. For Reporters Without Borders, that gives hope for a decline in impunity.

But elsewhere? In Syria and Iraq, in the area under the control of the Islamic State, an information black hole has formed. In the same way that in the physical world light does not escape black holes, journalists are no longer able to report on reports or to deliver information in those areas. The conflict in Syria began in 2011, and then spread to Iraq in the summer of 2014. It has caused the deaths of more than 210,000 civilians. Kidnapped, murdered and beheaded — journalists in Syria and Iraq are deliberately targeted and attacked by various parties to the conflict.

According to statistics compiled by Reporters Without Borders, in Syria alone over the past four years, at least 45 journalists were killed in the course or because of carrying doing their jobs. Since the summer of 2014 at least three journalists have been killed, 15 of them since the beginning of the 2013. A large number have been victims of kidnapping, arbitrary detention and hostage-taking.

As Syria and Iraq are not States parties to Rome Statute, it is urgent that the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, refer to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court the situations in Syria and Iraq where war crimes have been committed against journalists. Member States of the Security Council must show consistency when it comes to its resolutions on protecting journalists and launch a concrete process aimed at bringing perpetrators of crimes against journalists to justice at the international level.

The draft resolution that the Council is preparing to adopt deals with journalists, media professionals and associated personnel. In a welcome act, it mentions freedom of information online and offline. But it should explicitly extend the scope to all journalists worthy of the name. Journalism cannot be defined by a contractual relationship with a big media company. It has to do with a social function of collecting information methodically in accordance with the rules of honesty and independence. Whehter ones performs that function professionally or not is not important.

The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, adopted under the auspices of UNESCO in 2012, recognizes that the protection of journalists should not be limited to those officially recognized as such but also benefit other people, including community media workers and citizen journalists and others who use new media to reach their audiences.

Technology opens up spaces of freedom, for information and for expression in general; but there can be manipulation just as much as probity. Unfortunately, we are entering a new era of propaganda where completely new ways of controlling information — and therefore of controlling thoughts — are being put in place. We are entering a period of information wars.

Thanks to new technologies, terrorist groups, like all enemies of factual truths, can directly distribute their content around the world. Everything gets through: the barbarian propaganda film disguised as reportage, including sometimes journalists taken hostage, with a gun to their head, as well as truncated reality dressed up as a description of actuality.

Humankind and society need a trusted third party that makes collective and individual choices based on the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, in the words of UNESCO's Constitution. Of course, that assertion cannot be accepted without an understanding that this truth can take different shapes and sometimes contradictory results, as no one is the holder of truth. But if the search for the facts is conducted on the basis of that dictum and is not sponsored by interested parties and avoids seeing things through the prism of culture as much as possible — that is journalism.

We are witnessing a sort of globalization of threats. Responsibility for massacres such as the one carried out at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* are claimed, rightly or wrongly, from thousands of kilometres away. Murderous ideologies and propaganda machines are aimed against all those who report on dangerous reality, so as to intimidate into silence journalists and all those who embody and are living the freedom of expression, even on the other end of the world. That is the case in times of war, but it is also the case in peacetime.

That the Security Council is about to adopt a draft resolution on the protection of journalists in areas of armed conflict is a positive sign. But let us not forget that most journalists killed during or because of carrying out their duties are in countries said to be at peace in which persons in the pay of regimes, women and men of power, mafia linchpins and so on are perpetrating the worst abuses. We should not forget that half of the world's population has no access to free information, much less the right thereto, or are deprived of independent information because those who embody the freedom of information and persecuted and prevented from doing their work.

One day the Security Council will have to take that into account. One day the Council will have to assign obligations to States above and beyond situations of armed conflict. The Nobel Peace Price laureate in economics Amartya Sen has defined development as a process of expansion of substantial individual liberties. The freedom of information is one of the freedoms that favours the capabilities of an individual, in the sense of his mastery of the health system, the education system and the public debate — in a way, the sense of control over his life. If we want development not to be just about increasing wealth, but about improving all social, economic and political possibilities for individuals, then the freedom of information is a prerequisite. Accordingly, the protection of journalism depends upon this last condition.

As I speak here before the members of the Council, more than 150 professional journalists and 170 non-professional journalists are in prison worldwide as a means to prevent them from pursuing their investigative work and reporting. They too must be protected. As long as they are behind bars, millions if not hundreds of millions of people are deprived of the fruits of their investigative reporting.

It is the responsibility of the representatives of States to strike the balance between individuals and nations Accordingly, journalism's role is to depict the world as it is constituted by common aspirations and divergent interests. In giving a voice to everyone and portraying different angles, journalism gives us the ability to understand the other. Without that, no peace, worthy of the name, is possible, and it is the responsibility of Member States to establish this peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Deloire for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Pearl.

Ms. Pearl: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to share my thoughts on the safety of civilians, and particularly journalists.

I believe the future depends on the depth and intensity of the vow embraced by people today. I think that this is very good news, as it is very difficult to stop someone with the strong sense of justice. The will to ensure that no one else, including future generations, must endure the suffering that afflicts us depends upon individuals. Journalists everywhere are those single determined individuals who increasingly are bearing the weight of our democracies on their own.

I am speaking at a troubled time for our profession, a time that requires all of us to take a step back and display more than one form of courage. To me, courage — intellectual and moral — is the active ingredient that will allow us to use our destinies to inspire others and to defeat oppression. It was Mark Twain who said, "It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare". I believe there is no greater courage than the strength to live up to one's values, no matter what the circumstances. To stand up and speak takes courage; to sit down and listen also takes courage. I therefore thank the Council for doing this.

Somewhere during the wars, we journalists have lost the old, unspoken agreement that we were a neutral and fair profession. As a result, we are in danger. All of us are forced to wonder what kind of journalism exactly is worth dying for. Often, true acts of courage are invisible to others. It is not recklessness; it is not a search for fame or adrenaline. Rather, it is an intimate process, the profound will to enlighten humankind, to go beyond the obvious, to fight preconceived ideas, to battle the corruption and the greed that are crippling our societies.

Today, the confusion within our profession is great. We are searching for economic models, and we are trying to counter the competition of the Internet. Some run after breaking news for the sake of breaking the news. Others are walking on shaky ground, blurring further the frontier between proper journalism and entertainment news. The media itself needs introspection, so I will not talk on behalf of the media as a whole. Instead, I would like to concentrate on those journalists who have the courage to embrace the complexity of our world. The courage to honour the truth, no matter what the circumstances are, no matter how unpleasant, no matter how contrary it is to what the majority thinks. Those individuals who truly have the strength to empathize with others and the determination to honour the core values of journalism, such as giving a voice to the voiceless, resisting power, and letting those values that define our profession become who we are.

That search for integrity is our lifeline; but it is not only ours, it is also that of those here. For we are the ones who ensure that the public and politicians alike have the information they need to make informed choices: that the world is aware of the atrocities carried out by Daesh in Iraq and Syria, by Boko Haram in Nigeria and by the drug cartels in Mexico and Central America. Let us not forget that beyond the news are individual lives; beyond the politics is a human society; and beyond our differences is our common ground. That common ground is what terrorists are seeking to destroy. They want and they need to end dialogue, understanding and bonding among people.

How do they operate? They create a narrative, they use labels, and mostly they thrive on our weaknesses. Wars and conflict cannot live without a narrative, a justification that breeds on ignorance, fear and frustration. They kill journalists, workers of non-governmental organizations, Americans, Jews, those whom they call infidels and so on, in the hope of dispiriting all those who identify with their victims. Labels do not matter to them. But we are dealing with a group of militants who dehumanize themselves enough to kill a journalist whom they knew to be innocent and whom they held for an entire year.

How do we deal with this? How do we create a counter narrative? I believe that in Islam the most elaborate form of jihad is the battle an individual fights with him or herself to become enlightened. I and many journalists members may never hear about do what we can with the tools journalism gives us to destroy the base on which terrorists operate, that is, hatred. Accordingly, we report on what hatred feeds on — ignorance, prejudice, greed, corruption, human rights abuse, brain washing and the act of simplifying what cannot be simplified.

In my case, that translates into 13 years of a daily struggle — with a little help from my friend here, who is my son — to oppose hatred with empathy, violence with compassion and ignorance with education. I am not alone, but we have become targets. Insurgent groups no longer use reporters to transmit news, but instead kidnap them to make news. They treat us as enemy combatants and spies. This is our everyday reality. In many cases, the journalists taking this on are freelancers. That means young journalists doing the job that the mass media is increasingly reluctant to do. Often, they have no insurance, little training or equipment and no support. But they do have as much to lose as anybody else in this Chamber.

Women are bringing the world more than half of the news. A great majority of them are freelancers, which means they also face the added threats of sexual violence, cyberattacks on their integrity and harm to their families and children.

But let us not fool ourselves. Daesh and the likes are only the visible part of the iceberg. The worrying truth is that the response from Governments around the world is equally damaging and dangerous to journalists. Nearly 60 per cent of journalists jailed around the world are imprisoned on anti-State charges. Murder is the ultimate source of censorship, and not only in the case of Daesh. In 2014, impunity in journalism murder cases reached a staggering 96 per cent — a figure that Christophe Deloire just mentioned — and the remaining 4 per cent obtained only partial justice. Mass surveillance by some Security Council member States puts journalists and their sources at risk, undermining the trust and confidentiality vital to quality journalism. Additionally, an increasing number of countries are now using anti-terrorism laws to muzzle the press even further.

Why do we journalists continue working in such circumstances? Over the years, I have talked extensively to my colleagues on this subject. Those are people whom I am going to quote, and I am not quoting them because of their nationalities or because they happen to be women, but for rather for their bravery.

I remember meeting the excellent Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya when she was receiving an award in New York. She said,

> "I am exhausted. I have seen too much. I don't want to go back to Chechnya, but if I don't who will?"

Her articles had freed the wrongfully imprisoned and helped recover the abducted. She was murdered in front of her home in 2006.

War correspondent Marie Colvin, killed in Syria in 2012, wrote,

> "We go to remote war zones to report what is happening. The public has a right to know what our Governments and our armed forces are doing in our name. Our mission is to speak truth to power. We send home that first rough draft of history. We can

> and do make a difference in exposing the horrors of war, and especially the atrocities that befall civilians."

My dear friend Lydia Cacho, who revealed a pedophile network in Mexico, wrote:

> "I will never forget the face of General Montaño, who, with his colleague Agent Pérez, spent 20 hours torturing me psychologically, physically and sexually. It happened in a car that drove the 1,500 kilometres from Cancún to Puebla. They threatened to kill me, throw me out to sea and more. But I arrived at the prison alive because the media had managed to reveal the identity of my persecutors. Both of them were policemen."

Freelance photojournalist Nicole Tung, talked about Syria:

> "Covering Syria means facing a multifaceted set of problems, from bombardments to snipers to kidnappings by the Government, Islamic extremists and criminals. It is a place where journalists and Syrian activists must operate in a conflict of staggering destruction and desperation, and where no side" — and this is what is worrisome — "believes in the benefit of truth-telling any longer."

The neutral space in which journalists can operate as independent witnesses is shrinking. Governments and terrorist groups alike can bypass these objective witnesses and take their messages directly online and to social media. The lack of objective reporting means that extremists and Government propagandists are free to control the dissemination of information — information that is not based on facts and not investigated and confirmed by professional reporters. This has enormous implications when one needs to make informed decisions.

Furthermore, Governments are using terrorism charges as an excuse to clamp down on dissent and criticism. Journalists are routinely targeted and killed for their reporting on terrorist groups, while others are censored or imprisoned by Governments seeking to respond to the very same threat.

Already this year more than 25 journalists have been killed, the majority of them murdered. Member States have agreed to reduce impunity through resolutions on the safety of journalists and the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. These rhetorical commitments are welcome, but we need to see more concerted efforts on the ground to actually implement them.

Jailing and attacking journalists will not help defeat terrorists; it will only make them stronger. The Security Council must warn States that they should not use national security as an excuse to jail, harass or censor journalists. A statement or resolution outlining the threats journalists face, not only by terrorists but by the anti-terror movement as well, would be an important indication of this commitment.

All that said, I am intensely conscious that in the end it is the solidarity of ordinary people that will drive humankind forward — ordinary people such as the journalists I have just quoted, who have exemplified a moral courage that I truly hope will inspire the ordinary person in each of us.

The President: I thank Ms. Pearl for her statement and for her presence at this meeting.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/375, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Albania, Angola, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palau, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2222 (2015).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

Let me start by expressing my sincere appreciation to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Mr. Christophe Deloire for their briefings and valuable insights and to Mariane Pearl for sharing her very personal and deeply moving perspective with us today. What we just heard reaffirms my conviction that this debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations is very timely.

We rely more and more on real-time information in our decision-making. It is especially important in situations of armed conflict, where our ability to mobilize international response and assistance depends on knowing the facts as they happen. Journalists are our eyes and ears on the ground. Sadly, our being informed comes increasingly at the cost of their lives. Since 1992, 1,129 journalists have been killed.

It is journalists and media workers who often expose violations of international humanitarian law and human rights by warring parties, abuses by military and security forces, and the tyranny of repressive regimes. By doing so, they serve as early warning mechanisms, because, as we know so well, human rights abuses often predict conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes to come. The deliberate targeting of journalists and media workers is often used as a tactic of intimidation and revenge by parties to the conflict who do not want their criminal actions exposed.

For reporters, being in the midst of action is part of the job. They have to brave armed attacks, cross enemy lines, move with the displaced or persecuted minorities. They go to places others seek to escape. They constantly push the limits of their own safety and security.

The spread of radical extremism and terrorism adds another highly dangerous dimension to the threats journalists and media workers are facing. The beheadings of Daniel Pearl, James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Kenji Goto and others are testimony to the rabid brutality of terrorists who target journalists not only to instil fear among those eager to expose their barbarity, but also to make news, to advertise themselves, in fact.

Local journalists, especially women journalists, as has been mentioned today, and freelancers, are particularly exposed. According to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, roughly 90 per cent of those killed in conflict situations are local journalists. In September 2014, Daesh captured and beheaded cameraman Raad al-Azzawi in the Tikrit area. Earlier this month, Daesh killed a Mosul journalist Firas al-Bahri because he refused to pledge allegiance to the terrorist group. In most cases, however, the deaths of local journalists and media workers pass unnoticed by the international community.

Syria continues to be the deadliest place for journalists. At least 80 journalists have been killed in Syria since the conflict there began in 2011. The second and third places in the number of journalist deaths are Iraq and now Ukraine, because of the ongoing war against the country's sovereignty sponsored and supported by Russia.

Koichiro Matsuura, former Director-General of UNESCO, once said:

> "Every aggression against a journalist is an attack on our most fundamental freedoms. Press freedom and freedom of expression cannot be enjoyed without basic security."

I could not agree with that more.

Even if the legal framework for the protection of journalists has greatly evolved over the last decade, there is a need to reinforce existing international norms related to the protection of journalists by clarifying, reinforcing and amending existing the international framework. There is also an urgent need to reinforce the implementation of legal norms and provisions, including the accountability gap. Fewer than 5 per cent of the perpetrators of crimes against journalists have been prosecuted. In the majority of cases, the killers have never been found and no investigation has even been initiated.

It is the responsibility of all States to comply with their obligations to end impunity. Strengthening national legislation and tackling impunity for attacks against journalists would be an important contribution to their protection. The requirement to investigate, prosecute and punish unlawful arrests and attacks against journalists as well as the criminalization of any such unlawful behaviour should be an integral part of the fight against impunity.

Employer responsibility should also be strengthened, including with regard to local freelance staff, in order to improve the environment in which journalists operate today. Media agencies should contribute to the common goal of the protection of journalists by elaborating and implementing more stringent and more inclusive safety provisions for journalists and media workers covering stories, in conflict areas in particular.

It is not just traditional journalists who face threats. The rapid evolution of information technologies allows individuals to disseminate information freely and directly by using the Internet and social media. Such individuals, bloggers and independent reporters are increasingly targeted and their safety concerns need to be properly addressed.

Although we understand that dangers and threats can never be completely prevented or eradicated, and that journalists will still be targeted, not least because of the influence that their stories and objective reporting can have on the transformation of conflicts and societies, this awareness cannot justify inaction. Attacks on journalists are, like all attacks on civilians, attacks, first and foremost, on humankind. They are also attacks on the international community's ability to understand and respond effectively to conflicts that threaten international peace and security. Truth need not be the first casualty of war. Journalists need not be and should not be casualties of conflict. It is for this reason that Lithuania submitted a draft resolution on the protection of journalists. We thank all Council delegations for their cooperation and all the co-sponsors supporting our initiative.

The media is essential for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is our duty and responsibility to protect those who risk their lives in order to disclose and disseminate the truth. Today, however, wars are fought not only by means of equipment and weaponry, but also through deliberate disinformation, propaganda and media restrictions. As warfare becomes increasingly asymmetrical, and targeted propaganda becomes just another weapon of war, there is a clear need for more comprehensive measures to ensure the independence of the free media. To quote the French philosopher Helvétius:

> "To limit the press is to insult a nation; to prohibit reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either fools or slaves."

The fundamental freedoms of expression and information, part and parcel of fundamental human rights, are at the core of the freedom and prosperity of our societies. By protecting journalists and media workers, we help to protect our freedom.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Council.

Mr. Ybáñez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my appreciation for the briefings given by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson, Mr. Deloire on behalf of Reporters Without Borders, and Ms. Pearl. Their briefings were quite moving and we will have to carefully examine their proposals. I would also like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for organizing this open debate and for supporting resolution 2222 (2015), which we adopted today.

We are joined today in the Chamber by a sizeable delegation from the Congress of Deputies of Spain representing the various political forces of my country. Their visit reflects their desire to learn about the work of the Council, benefiting from our presence in this body, and to support the important work of this organ.

Freedom of the press, as a clear expression of freedom of expression and opinion, is the backbone of a free society. Freedom of expression and opinion is the oxygen that is essential to all democratic systems worthy of that name. That right is clearly enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which expresses its dual role and states that it is essential for everyone to be able to express their views without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The exercise of freedom of the press is fundamental, not only by journalists. It is a difficult profession as it must be guided by the need to provide truthful information. In that undertaking, it is inevitable that disagreements will arise with political authorities. However this job is essential in order to be able to know, to think and to shape opinions. Hence, the role of journalists is particularly important in armed conflicts. The independent press informs us about realities on the ground. The development of new technologies has significantly facilitated access to information and news in real-time, has increased the number of information sources and enhanced the role of the media.

Journalists are an important counterweight against propaganda, which often tries to manipulate public opinion. Abuses can occur, such as when radio stations were used in the Great Lakes region two decades ago to incite hatred. In some cases, journalists are the only mode of access to truthful information: today we would not know much about events taking place in Yemen or Syria if it were not for the presence of reporters who often take their commitment to their job to heroic extremes. Very often, journalists are the only voices that the victims of abuses and attacks against civilians have to rely on. Hence, they play an essential role to ensure a response by the international community to try to prevent an escalation of violence or, at least, mitigate its consequences.

Furthermore, they are important to make sure that crimes do not go unpunished and that perpetrators area brought to justice. For example, the pictures taken and preserved by the Spanish deportee Francisco Boix in the Mauthausen concentration camp were critical in establishing responsibility in the trials after the Second World War. The media spurs Governments and civil society to find peaceful solutions to conflicts. Indeed, journalism has contributed to shaping the agenda of the Security Council by bringing attention to notions including the protection of civilians, children in armed conflict, and women and peace and security. The pressure to which journalists are subjected to in conflict situations is the best reflection of the uncomfortable yet irreplaceable role played by journalism such circumstances. In Burundi, for example, independent radio and television channels have not been able to broadcast for many weeks. Such type of pressure occurs in many parts of the world. Attacks against journalists in Ukraine throughout last year, for example, are very troubling.

The working conditions of journalists are unfortunately increasingly difficult due to the threat of terrorism. The pressure and intimidation by terrorist groups is increasing. Abductions of journalists increased by 30 per cent in 2014. In parts of Iraq and Syria we are now talking of a news blackout because there is no possible access by the media. The year 2015 had a painful and outrageous beginning with the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*. Terrorists are increasing their scope of action. The reason that terrorist groups have chosen the press is clear: they abhor pluralism and try to impose themselves using coercive means. Countries such as Spain that have suffered terrorist attacks know from experience that these groups are moved by a totalitarian instinct. Jihadi terrorism uses the Internet and social media as key tools to recruit combatants and obtain financing. Groups such as Daesh use social networks to publicize their activities and to terrorize. In the medium- and long-term, the best way to combat jihadist propoganda is through truthful information about the real face of terrorism. The testimony of the Yazidi girls that managed to escape Daesh in Iraq and the Nigerian girls who were recently freed from the inhumane imprisonment of Boko Haram are telling examples.

We owe a great deal to the media. In contrast, our tools to ensure their protection are very limited. Let me just mention some measures that can be used to improve the conditions in which they conduct their very difficult work. It is necessary to publicly acknowledge the work carried out by the media and to reiterate our commitment to their protection. Open debates such as today's are an excellent opportunity to do this. The work of the Security Council also offers opportunities such as adopting draft resolutions and press statements or even imposing sanctions.

States should actively promote the establishment of a secure framework so that journalists can exercise their profession free of coercion and intimidation. That begins with the ratification and implementation of the relevant international instruments in the area of international humanitarian law and human rights, including the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or mechanisms such as the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteur of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It is also essential to support the work Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

It is essential that we take into account the views of the media themselves as we identify activities to protect their security. No one is better placed than professionals of the press to contribute to this debate. Before coming to New York, I had the opportunity to meet in Madrid with professional associations of the Spanish press, including Reporters Without Borders, and to hear their views. I heard very interesting proposals, some of which I would like to highlight here.

One was a proposal for the prosecution of crimes against journalists as war crimes, pursuant to various considerations. I have already mentioned the important role of the media in armed conflict. Journalists, given the specific nature of their work, are particularly exposed to threats and dangers. The abduction and execution of journalists are instruments of propaganda, intimidation and terrorism used by terrorist groups to influence public opinion. There is a high level of impunity for crimes against journalists, as has been highlighted in the briefings today, which calls for enhanced cooperation between the Council and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

It would also be useful — again I am conveying a proposal by the media in Spain — to receive a report from the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on the increasingly frequent and worrisome phenomenon of the forced exile of numerous journalists. According to Reporters Without Borders, in 2014 139 journalists and 20 bloggers had to seek exile, almost twice the number of the previous year. The main reason was the threat of violence or imprisonment related to the issues under their investigation. Only 5 per cent returned to their countries of origin, and the remaining 95 per cent remain vulnerable even in exile.

I would now like to refer briefly to Spain's three priorities of significant importance bearing on the subject of today's debate.

First, on gender equality, the communications media are essential both to prevent violence against women and to articulate their participation in peace processes. The radio station Okapi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a partner of the United Nations with 14 million listeners, is an excellent example of this. Last year, Spain awarded its most prestigious award, the Princess of Asturias Award for Concordia, to journalist Caddy Adzuba for defending human rights and freedom of the press. We would point to such concrete measures as the inclusion in the sanctions committees the designation criteria related to the violation of the rights of women, including the many women journalists who champion them.

Second is the review of peacekeeping operations. We believe that the role of the media should be given priority attention in defining the terms of reference of United Nations political missions and peacekeeping operations. Resolution 2222 (2015), which we adopted today, emphasizes the importance of that factor.

Third is the factor against terrorism. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy underscores the media's important role in curbing the spread of extremist ideologies. The review to take place in 2016 will give us the opportunity to strengthen that perspective. Moreover, for our part, during the meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee in Madrid in July, we will address the role of the media in a panel dedicated to the identification and prevention of the recruitment of foreign fighters.

I should like to conclude with another proposal. The United Nations has an extensive network of agencies and institutions that could contribute to improving the security of journalists, as reflected in the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, approved by UNESCO in 2012. It would be a good idea to assess its impact and to transmit its findings to the relevant bodies of the United Nations system. The tenth anniversary of resolution 1738 (2006) in 2016 will be an excellent opportunity for that, and to strengthen cooperation in this field between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Finally, I should like to express my admiration and gratitude to the professionals of the press, particularly those who risk their lives in situations of conflict, for their noble commitment to give voice to witnesses. Their stories are critical to keeping our consciences awake and helping us to respond to crimes and abuses. On behalf of Spain, I pay tribute to them.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting and for Lithuania's consistent effort to integrate the issue of press freedom and the threats to it across the work we do at the Council., I would also like to thank our guest briefers, Mr. Deloire and Ms. Pearl, for their powerful words today and for the tremendous work they are doing to advance this most critical cause. Ms. Pearl has been a tremendous force for good in the world. As a mother and former journalist, I am in awe of her strength. I offer a special thanks to her son Adam for being present today; he is the best reminder of why we need to do more to protect journalists.

Nearly two years ago in July 2013, when the Council last met to discuss the issue of the protection of journalists (see S/PV.7003), the United States raised the case of Mazen Darwish, the Head of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression. Darwish had been held incommunicado since February 2012, when he was detained by regime officials along with several colleagues. Today, he remains behind bars along with two fellow staff members, Hani Zaitani and Hussein Ghreir. On 13 May, earlier this month, their trial was suspended for the twenty-fourth time, which is little surprise, given that their only crime was to report the truth about the Al-Assad regime's atrocities. Since the beginning of this month, the whereabouts of the three men have been unknown. Mazen's brave wife Yara Bader, who has led the Centre since his arrest and campaigned around the globe for his release, is with us in the Chamber today. I thank Yara for all she is doing. Darwish's case exemplifies the first of three challenges I want to highlight today with respect to the protection of journalists.

How does the international community protect journalists from parties that deliberately target them? In the four plus years since the Syrian conflict began, more than 80 journalists have been killed and at least 90 more abducted, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Countless more have been threatened, attacked, wounded, barrel-bombed or disappeared. They have been targeted by both the Al-Assad regime and violent extremist groups like Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), whose grotesque executions of journalists alongside humanitarian aid workers, foreign soldiers and people of different religions or political beliefs seemed aimed both at using their victim's suffering as a recruiting tool and at dissuading other journalists from covering the conflict.

Unfortunately, their tactics seem to be working, as the videos of their executions are widely disseminated on social media, while both international and national coverage of the Syrian conflict itself has declined dramatically. What the Al-Assad regime, ISIL and other State and non-State actors like them that target journalists have in common is that they do not want people to see them for what they really are — whether that is a regime willing to torture, bomb, gas and starve its people in order to hold onto power or a group masquerading as religious that routinely desecrates the basic dignity of human beings. That is why the Mazen Darwishes, James Foleys and Daniel Pearls of the world are so dangerous to those groups and Governments. Their reporting strips away the façade and shows us what lies beneath.

That brings me to the second challenge. How do we protect journalists, and more broadly, press freedoms in situations in which violence is escalating and there is a risk of mass atrocities? That is important, as we know that a robust press can play a key role in helping to prevent crises from metastasizing into full-blown conflicts and mitigating the conditions in which grave human rights violations tend to occur.

We are seeing that right now in Burundi. After the ruling party's announcement of the candidacy of President Nkurunziza for what would be his third term, despite the explicit two-term limit set by the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, there were large public protests. The Government responded by shuttering the country's most important media outlets. Not long after members of the military attempted to oust the current Nkurunziza Government, the offices of at least four independent radio stations, which have generally been critical of the Nkurunziza Government, were attacked and their equipment destroyed. Since the unlawful attempt to seize power was quashed, several independent journalists report being told that they are on a list of people to be arrested, and many more reportedly have been threatened with death, torture and disappearance, forcing them to go into hiding. One Burundian journalist said in an interview: "No journalist feels safe enough to look for information". That is right now, in Burundi.

Even in countries that are not experiencing conflicts or at imminent risk of sliding into unrest, the erosion of press freedoms is often a harbinger of the rolling back of human rights that are critical to healthy democracies. This is the third challenge that I would like to raise: how do we — and by "we" I mean the United Nations, bodies such as the Security Council and our individual Member States — push back against the erosion of press freedoms by Governments intent on silencing critical voices and other key outlets of free expression. Look to any region and you will see alarming warning signs of how the crackdown on press freedom is coupled with a broader crackdown on civil and political rights.

Take Ethiopia, where nine journalists, six of them bloggers from the collective Zone 9, which covers political and social news, have been imprisoned since April 2014 under Ethiopia's anti-terrorism proclamation. After 20 administrative hearings, their trial finally began on 30 March. If convicted under the proclamation, they could face up to more than a dozen years in prison.

Take Azerbaijan, where Khadija Ismayilova, a contributor to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Azerbaijani service, remains incarcerated on charges widely viewed as politically motivated. Ismayilova is known for her reporting on corruption. After arresting her in December 2014 on charges of inciting a man to commit suicide, authorities raided RFE/RL's Baku office, interrogated its staff, confiscated reporting notes and sealed the newsroom. New charges have been added to Ismayilova's case as she awaits her trial, including embezzlement, illegal business and abuse of power.

It is worth noting that all around the world, for every individual or group targeted through prosecution, attacks and threats, there are countless more impacted: people who, seeing the risks, either begin to self-censor, go into hiding or flee the countries that so desperately need their independent voices.

Given the critical importance of press freedoms in advancing so many of the goals of the Council, let me make four recommendations in closing as to how we can meet these challenges.

First, we must condemn the Governments and non-State actors that attack journalists as well as the overly restrictive laws and regulations that undermine their freedom. It is much easier to prevent these spaces from closing than it is to fight to reopen them.

Secondly, we must give journalists the tools they need to protect themselves, particularly when working in conflict zones and repressive societies. The $100 million that the United States has invested in training more than 10,000 at-risk journalists and human rights defenders in digital safety and in providing them with anti-censorship tools is one example. Another is the training provided by civil-society groups such as the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, whose director in Iraq, Ammar Al-Shahbander, was killed by a car bomb on 2 May, a devastating loss for his family, the community of journalists he mentored and his nation.

Thirdly, we can ensure that the people who attack journalists are actually held accountable for their crimes. The failure to effectively investigate and prosecute such crimes sends a clear message to perpetrators that they can continue to commit them without any consequences.

Fourthly and finally, we can help create programmes to protect journalists operating in conflict zones, particularly those targeted for their work. Colombia shows how this can be done. The national protection unit established by the Government in 2011 is empowered to protect 19 vulnerable groups, including journalists and human rights defenders. As of last year, more than 80 journalists — and this is extraordinary — were receiving protection measures ranging from cell phones and transport subsidies to bodyguards and armoured cars. The programme has an annual budget of $160 million, which speaks to Colombia's commitment to protecting these individuals and the country's recognition of the crucial role that these groups play.

One of the journalists who has received protection is Jineth Bedoya Lima. In 2000, when Bedoya was 26 years old, she was heading into one of the country's most dangerous prisons to report on paramilitary groups when she was abducted, drugged and driven to a hideout, where she was raped and beaten by three men. As they were abusing her, one of her captors told her, "We are sending a message to the press in Colombia". Later they left Bedoya bound, by a trash dump. She fled the country soon after. Today Bedoya is back in Colombia, reporting stories with the protection of bodyguards from Colombia's unit. She still feels fear but perseveres, driven by a commitment to telling the stories that otherwise would go untold, and that includes her own.

In speaking out about her own experience, Bedoya has helped make the serious and seriously underreported problem of sexual assault in Colombia's long-running conflict more visible, and she has become a leading advocate of accountability even as several of her own attackers continue to roam free. Bedoya also led a countrywide campaign to establish a national day for the dignity of women victims of sexual violence, which last year Colombia's President, Manuel Santos Calderón, agreed to establish. Colombia just honoured the day for the first time two days ago, on Monday, 25 May.

There are few greater living testaments to the value of protecting journalists than Bedoya's story. We must not allow voices like hers to be silenced.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate, which is today more necessary than ever. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement as well as Ms. Pearl and Mr. Deloire for their important testimony, which allows us better to understand the challenges that journalists encounter on the ground and to identify concrete actions to better protect them. We will never forget Daniel Pearl or any one of the journalists who paid with their life for their commitment to the freedom of information. Their tragedy represents an obligation for all of us. I wish to say to Mariane Pearl that her commitment is a source of inspiration for all of us, and I wish to welcome her son, who will celebrate his birthday tomorrow.

I would also like to commend the tireless work carried out for many years by Reporters Without Borders to draw attention to the situation of journalists under threat and to find concrete ways to improve the situation.

On 7 January, in the heart of Paris, two terrorists attacked the headquarters of Charlie Hebdo with heavy weapons. They killed 12 people and wounded 11 others. By attacking that newspaper, terrorists killed not only individuals. When a journalist is killed, it is the freedom of expression that is targeted. As emphasized in resolution 2222 (2015), adopted by the Council today, a free and independent press is one of the essential foundations of our democratic societies. Even before the murderous attack on Charlie Hebdo, journalists everywhere have been the victims of violence and paid with their lives for the freedom of expression.

In 2014, as has been noted, some 66 journalists, 11 assistants and 19 citizen journalists were killed. Over 350 of them were placed in detention. Thousands more were the victims of harassment, arbitrary arrest and freedom-destroying legislation. This trend continues in 2015; 25, including many local journalists, have already lost their lives this year. Everywhere journalists are subject to persecution by authoritarian regimes that attempt to silence them. Thus some 100 journalists, professionals and non-professionals both, have been killed in Syria since the beginning of the conflict there, including four French citizens. They paid with their lives for their determination to show to the world the reality of the indiscriminate repression affecting the Syrian people. In addition to persecution by the regime, there is also the barbarity of Daesh. This terrorist group does not hesitate to use the media to show the execution of journalists, staged in a macabre way that deeply shocks the human conscience.

The terrorists attack journalists because they represent everything that Daesh hates and tries to eradicate: freedom, pluralism, culture and democracy. In Iraq as in Syria, they are trying to create a black hole from which information cannot escape and where obscurantism and darkness reign supreme. These terrorists should know that their barbaric actions will only strengthen our collective determination to fight them.

Everyone agrees today that the challenge of protecting journalists is still far from having been taken up. It is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments to protect journalists and to allow them to carry out their duties independently and without hindrance. That necessarily involves the fight against impunity for those who commit acts of violence. States must systematically investigate, apprehend and try the perpetrators. Currently, 90 per cent of the murders of journalists go unpunished, which promotes further acts of violence. That situation is unacceptable. The International Criminal Court can also play a role. According to the Geneva Conventions, journalists are civilians. Their murder can therefore constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute. The texts exist. They need to be applied.

It is up to the international community, in particular the Security Council, to consider this situation and to act to protect journalists. We should recognize the vulnerability of journalists in conflict zones and should more methodically and systematically ensure that peacekeeping operations guarantee their protection as civilians at risk. Peacekeeping operations should also report to the Council on human rights violations that target journalists.

As Mr. Deloire reminded us, violence against journalists is not confined to situations of armed conflict. Most attacks take place in countries at peace, most often when journalists are investigating cases of corruption or organized crime. In that regard, the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, developed under the auspices of UNESCO in 2012, is an excellent initiative. It should now be fully implemented by the United Nations system as a whole, in cooperation with Member States and civil society. It would also be important, as Mr. Deloire has urged, to consider ways to improve the coherence, effectiveness and visibility of United Nations efforts on the issue of the protection of journalists.

The freedom to provide information lies at the heart of every democracy. It is in the DNA of France and is one of our highest priorities, both internally and outside our borders. Every day, journalists, bloggers, war reporters and associated staff help us better understand the world and its changes. We can all see that the first reflex of the enemies of freedom is to gag the press, and that the first defenders of democracy are the independent media. Freedom of expression should be respected everywhere. It is our collective responsibility, including here in the Security Council, to work to ensure the full exercise of that freedom. Let us make that our shared fight.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome you, Sir, along with the other ministers joining us today. I would also like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for organizing today's open debate on the protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict. I also thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General; Mr. Christophe Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders; and Ms, Mariane Pearl, of the Daniel Pearl Foundation, for their briefings.

The armed conflicts currently taking place around the world expose the suffering of civilians, especially that of women, children and vulnerable individuals. The eyewitness accounts of journalists in situations of armed conflict have become essential. Thanks to their presence, we receive information in real time about the numerous violations and abuses committed against innocent civilians, which has often enabled the international community to take important decisions. Not only do the men and women of the press work under difficult conditions, but they are increasingly the target of deliberate attacks in conflict zones. They are often abducted or kidnapped for ransom, if not tortured or executed in the absence of any legal proceedings. Women journalists and their female associates are not spared and are even, at times, deliberately singled out. When the terrorists of Daesh, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, other Al-Qaida affiliates and other armed groups make them a favoured target, our obligation must be to offer immediate help by strengthening their protection. The effective pursuit of the perpetrators of such acts is a way to dissuade non-State actors who do not consider themselves bound by international instruments to protect journalists.

Journalists present in situations of armed conflict enjoy the same protections as other civilians in the application of international humanitarian law in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The adoption of resolution 1738 (2006), which demands the protection of journalists in war zones, raised great hopes and was cause for rejoicing within the profession, even if its implementation did not meet expectations. Despite the obligations derived from the Geneva Conventions and resolution 1738 (2006), attacks against journalists have not diminished. According to the concept note (S/2015,303, annex) provided by the Lithuanian presidency, in 2014 alone, 61 journalists were killed, 87 per cent of whom were local, while 221 others were imprisoned. The problem of protecting journalists in situations of armed conflict is therefore more closely tied to insufficient or absent political will on the part of warring parties with respect to their obligations, than to the lack of a legal framework.

We hope that the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 2222 (2015)) marks a new phase in the commitment of States to fully assume their obligations with respect to the protection of media professionals in armed conflict and sends a strong message from the Council that unjustified attacks on journalists around the world will not go unpunished. In that light, it is urgent to stress practical, effective measures that will help prevent and reduce the attacks that currently target men and women in the media. While recalling the primary responsibility of warring parties, especially States, to protect journalists, we would do well to highlight the contribution of international, regional and subregional organizations to bolstering compliance. Raising awareness among those concerned and providing technical assistance to developing countries with respect to protection will also contribute to promoting cooperation on the issue. In that regard, we welcome the specific attention that UNESCO and the Human Rights Council have devoted to the matter of protecting journalists.

We commend the immensely important role of journalists and associated staff in the protection of civilians caught up in situations of armed conflict and their contribution to establishing democratic societies. We stress the fact that their training and rigorous adherence to professional codes of ethics will help some of them avoid the pitfalls of disinformation and the calls to hatred that risk exacerbating conflicts. In that regard, journalists should respect the principles of impartiality and objectivity in the exercise of their profession. We also remind those in charge of media outlets to carefully weigh the risks before sending journalists and associated staff into conflict areas, in order to avoid subjecting them to the indiscriminate terror that all too often targets them today.

In conclusion, allow me once again to honour the memory of all those who have been unjustly executed and to pay homage to those still in the hands of armed groups and terrorists. We join with others in calling for their immediate and unconditional release, and in demanding that the perpetrators of those crimes be pursued and brought to justice. Impunity for those who kill journalists must be stopped.

Mr. van Bohemen (New Zealand): Mr. President, I would like to welcome you and the other Foreign Ministers who are taking part in today's debate, and to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing. I would like to commend the thought-provoking briefings we have had from Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Mariane Pearl, particularly Ms. Pearl's reflections on the changing nature of journalism, the need for reflection on the balance between reportage and entertainment, and her analysis of the threats posed — by terrorist organizations, other non-State actors and, sadly, Governments that are Members of our Organization — to those who take on the demanding challenge of reporting the news.

It has been almost nine years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1738 (2006), on the protection of journalists in armed conflict. The intervening years have been particularly dangerous and bloody, as we have heard today. More than 60 journalists have been killed each year since the adoption of resolution 1738 (2006). Most, but not all, of those fatalities have been conflict-related, and many more deaths go unreported. Already this year 25 journalists have been killed. New Zealand therefore welcomes the opportunity this debate gives us to reflect on the protection of journalists in armed conflict, and we commend Lithuania for taking that initiative.

Today I wish to focus on four challenges to protection. The first is tackling impunity. In nine out of 10 cases, the perpetrators of attacks on journalists are never prosecuted. That remains first and foremost a national responsibility. While it may pose particular challenges for fragile and conflict-affected States, there are tools available to assist them with it, including through regional organizations. States should be better at asking for help. Today's resolution 2222 (2015) strengthens standards in that area.

Secondly, New Zealand welcomes the increased monitoring by the United Nations of the protection of journalists, including in the Secretary-General's thematic report on the protection of civilians (S/2013/689) and in country-specific reports. Such reports should reflect on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and of the various special rapporteurs and envoys who raise concerns about attacks on journalists in connection to their own mandates. That will provide more clarity, at the national level and across the United Nations system, for improving the implementation of resolution 1738 (2006) and now resolution 2222 (2015) as well.

Thirdly, we recognize the particular vulnerabilities faced by local journalists, who represent a majority of the victims. Local journalists often lack access to the kind of equipment and resources that can help them to keep safe. In that regard, we urge media organizations to take responsibility for all their staff, regardless of their national status. We also urge United Nations personnel in the field to remain alert to the protection challenges facing local journalists.

Finally, there is the transformative effect of technology and the rapidly evolving media landscape. Anyone with a pen and notepad, a smart phone and a Twitter account can contribute to the discussion through the Internet and social media. That has led to the rise of citizen journalists, who are often the only source of information in areas controlled by terrorists and other non-State actors. The importance of such changes cannot be ignored. Citizen journalists are often exposed and at risk. That has been grimly demonstrated in Syria, where credible reports indicate that at least 130 Internet and citizen journalists have been killed since the start of the conflict.

Journalists remain a vital part of our work here in the Council. We have been reminded graphically today of many of the horrible incidents involving the persecution of journalists in Syria and elsewhere. We value the close relationship we have with the representatives of the media who follow the work of the Council both here and in conflicts abroad. The story of what is happening on the ground and behind the scenes must be told. The people of Burundi, Syria, South Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen and elsewhere need a voice.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the opportunity for the Council to once again address the issue of the protection of journalists, which is such an important aspect of the problem of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

In the context of the various ongoing armed conflicts, journalism remains one of the most dangerous professions. Only last week we received the news of another tragic death of a representative of the press, the Iraqi television journalist Firas Al-Bahri, executed by the Islamic State. Journalists who fall into the category of civilians under international humanitarian law are protected accordingly under the code for armed conflict, and that is entirely proper.

Against the backdrop of the growing role that the media plays in the world's political and social life, issues related to journalists' activities are increasingly included on the agenda of various international institutions and organizations, especially UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council. We view today's resolution 2222 (2015) as a continuation of resolution 1738 (2006), the Council's foundational document on the subject. The topic of protecting journalists' safety should continue to be seen as a priority in the work of those bodies, while of course taking into account their mandate and purview. At the same time, attempts to expand the interpretation of the category to include practically anyone and everyone who uses the Internet, even if they are not involved in professional journalism, will not improve its effectiveness. Blurring the concept of what a journalist is will not help the situation.

Despite the measures that the international community has taken, the situation regarding the protection of journalists leaves much to be desired. Their rights are sometimes grossly ignored and their lives and health threatened. The number of journalists killed increased in 2014. News of the deaths of or injuries to journalists in Syria, Iraq and Libya and other countries continues to reach us with alarming regularity. Employees of the media working in hot spots have become victims of intimidation, attacks, searches, arbitrary detentions and expulsions. The kidnapping of journalists by the Islamic State and related terrorist organizations is extremely worrying. We all know about cases in which the equipment that journalists need in order to carry out their professional tasks has been intentionally destroyed or confiscated.

We are particularly concerned about the situation in Ukraine, where journalists, especially those representing Russian media, are not only endangered for doing their job, but are also forced to work in conditions of open discrimination. Russian journalists are periodically captured by members of the Ukrainian special services. Some representatives of Russian and foreign media have paid with their lives for their efforts to work in a war zone and report the truth about what is happening there. Unfortunately, such cases have not only gone unpunished, they have not always come to the attention of the relevant international entities and human-rights organizations.

One of the aspects of modern armed conflict is what is known as the information war. Winning it involves employing a wide-ranging arsenal of weapons, which include, in particular, some States' decisions to ban broadcasts or impose sanctions on media they do not like. We should also include in this type of warfare the spread of incitements to intolerance and the rhetoric of hatred. In that regard, it is important to recall the responsibility that journalists have to society.

We agree with the provisions of the concept note prepared for today's meeting (S/2015/307, annex) on the need to ensure the proper training of journalists working in armed conflict situations and to minimize the risks involved in such work. The growing number of victims among journalists clearly points to the need to step up efforts to ensure their protection in areas of armed conflict. The main responsibility for ensuring the protection of civilians, including journalists, lies with the parties to the conflict.

We strongly condemn any acts of violence against journalists and call on the authorities of all States on whose territory armed conflict is unfolding to make every possible effort to investigate and prosecute such crimes, in particular those against media professionals, and to bring to justice those responsible.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I wish to thank Mr. Linkevičius, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, and Lithuania for convening this timely debate on the important issue of the protection of civilians, particularly journalists, in situations of armed conflict. We believe that his presence here today demonstrates the great importance he attaches to the issue, and we commend Lithuania's leadership in taking this agenda forward.

We are pleased to have co-sponsored and joined the consensus on resolution 2222 (2015), which the Council has just adopted.

My delegation thanks Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General; Mr. Christophe Deloire from Reporters Without Borders; and Ms. Mariane Pearl of the Daniel Pearl Foundation for their respective briefings, to which we have listened with much interest.

In our view, resolution 2222 (2015) makes a positive contribution towards strengthening existing international norms and standards on the protection of civilians, particularly journalists operating in situations of armed conflict. Malaysia take this opportunity to honour those brave souls who have risked life and limb — and in some cases have paid the ultimate price — while pursuing their calling, that is, shedding light on the human dimension of conflicts, including the underlying causes and the narratives of those caught in circles of violence.

We underscore that in situations of armed conflict, the responsibility to ensure the protection of civilians, including journalists, rests on the parties to the conflict, without regard to whether such conflict occurs at intra- or inter-State level. Indeed, such responsibility on the part of the parties to a conflict is clearly enshrined in the applicable international instruments on international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international criminal law. We view with serious concern the increasing trend of journalists being deliberately targeted by parties to a conflict. The statistics are all the more troubling as they seem to indicate that journalists are being deliberately targeted, particularly by non-State actors, including terrorist groups and affiliated individuals.

Just over a week ago, on 20 May, reports emerged about the abduction and subsequent execution of journalist Feras Yasin by Daesh, in Mosul, Iraq. Scarcely a month earlier, on 27 April and also in Mosul, the body of Thaer Al-Ali, Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper *Rai al-Nas*, was found. He, too, was abducted before being executed, also by Daesh. Their crime? They shed light on atrocities committed by the group.

All the more chilling are the recent and ongoing atrocities committed by Daesh and its affiliates in cynically manipulating their acts of the torture, mutilation and murder of journalists — including James Foley, Kenji Goto and Steven Sotloff — as propaganda tools in pursuit of questionable political goals. Against such developments, the international community and the Council must stiffen their collective resolve towards ensuring that no more journalists will suffer the fate of those brave individuals.

The prevalence of a culture of impunity and the absence of rule of law, good governance and the attendant institutions of law and order are among the key factors that negatively affect the safety and security of civilians in conflict situations, including journalists. We fully subscribe to the principle that where violations and abuse of civilians occur, the perpetrators must be held accountable, including through punitive action.

In that regard, we note with concern the Secretary-General's report (A/69/268), which, inter alia, underscored the absence of accountability for attacks against journalists. The figures cited are worrying. In this year alone conflict situations around the world have claimed the lives of at least 13 journalists. Since 1992, 377 journalists and media professionals have lost their lives due to violent conflict or while on a dangerous mission. Malaysia suffered its first casualty some three years ago when Mr. Noramfaizul Mohd Nor, a cameraman traveling with a humanitarian convoy in Somalia, was killed in a crossfire incident.

Malaysia reaffirms that the role played by journalists in situations of armed conflict is crucial and indispensable. Taking a broader perspective, journalists also play a positive role in contributing to the protection of civilians, including by reporting on alleged atrocities or documenting violence in the search for justice for the victims. Bearing in mind the risks that these brave individuals assume in extracting information from situations of violence and conflict and ensuring that such information reaches those in a position to address the situation — including this Council — necessitates a corresponding response to promote their continued safety, security and well-being while operating in such harsh conditions.

In the context of situations of violent and armed conflict, journalists perform a critical role through their exercise of the right to freedom of expression and opinion. As we have all seen, many journalists have paid a steep price, and many will continue to pay unless all concerned parties take clear measures to ensure their safety and security in such situations. My delegation believes that the Council must continue to advocate for the safety and protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict. Malaysia remains fully seized of and committed to that undertaking, alongside other Council members.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Jordanian delegation expresses its warmest gratitude for the opportunity to discuss the very important topic of the protection of journalists in conflict situations. We thank the Deputy Secretary-General and Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Marianne Pearl.

Significant progress has been achieved in developing legal criteria on the protection of journalists and media professionals in armed conflict since the adoption of the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, and General Assembly resolution 2677 (XXV) of 1970. Those actions comprise decisive steps in ensuring the protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict.

However, in spite of such efforts, we continue to witness unprecedented increases in the number of victims among international journalists and media professionals. The year 2014 witnessed the deaths of 67 journalists and the abductions of 119, as well as the exile of 139 journalists and the imprisonment of 221. In 2015, 25 journalists have already been killed. Many women journalists have been victims of the worst forms of sexual and physical violence.

Such organized and methodical targeting of journalists and other media professionals is a violation of international humanitarian law. The reason for such attacks is the very nature of journalists' work and their attempt to cover conflicts and wars, most of which are no longer traditional conflicts and in which at least one of the parties is a non-State actor. That has led to a significant increase in the level of violations committed against journalists and has strengthened impunity for those responsible.

One of the most significant challenges the international community faces is ensuring accountability and fighting against impunity for those responsible for violence and crimes against journalists and media professionals and their headquarters during a conflict. We would like to reiterate, in this context, the need for the United Nations to help the States experiencing armed conflict to establish and rebuild national legal institutions and witness-protection programmes so that States can prosecute those responsible for attacks against civilians, including journalists. In certain conditions, and to guarantee accountability and protection for such individuals, the international community must set up commissions to investigate, monitor and gather information on crimes committed against journalists and media professionals during armed conflict.

Jordan believes that the time has come to consider once again a draft international convention on the international protection of journalists and those in other dangerous professions. Such a convention would include provisions and mechanisms to protect journalists and media outlets during armed conflict in order to ensure that they are provided with the highest possible protection. In the same vein, in terms of combating violations and crimes against journalists and media professionals, those responsible for such acts who have enjoyed impunity must be prosecuted. That must be a priority for the United Nations. Peacekeeping operations should therefore also work with State institutions and parties to the conflict to raise awareness among them of the legal protection that journalists benefit from during armed conflict and the risks that such attacks pose for them. More pressure needs to be exerted to ensure greater protection for journalists and prosecution of those responsible for attacks against them.

The goal of the journalists and media professionals working in conflict zones is to have direct access to events as they unfold in order to shed light on the facts and communicate them in a frank, objective and complete manner. We would like to reiterate what has already been stated today, namely, the need for media organizations to offer training programmes for journalists and media professionals who are covering events in conflict areas. It is essential to bolster their ability to deal with the kind of dangerous situations that they could face and to ensure their physical protection in carrying out their job. Along the same lines, efforts must be promoted to ensure the highest quality medical service to journalists and media professionals who are victims and to offer them the necessary psychological, social and legal support when they are wounded in the course of their work.

Finally, allow me to reiterate Jordan's support for the protection of civilians, including journalists and media professionals in armed conflict. We pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in trying to shed light on the facts during armed conflict and thus promoting international peace and security.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. I welcome the adoption of resolution 2222 (2015) — the first in nine years on this important issue — and congratulate you, Sir, on the leadership Lithuania has shown in moving the issue forward.

I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his insightful briefing and Director-General Deloire and Ms. Pearl for their moving testimony today. I pay tribute to them and their colleagues for their work in truly difficult circumstances. I was particularly struck by the individual stories of bravery that we heard regarding the journalists with moral courage who gave their lives in pursuit of their profession so that all of us may have a better understanding of the truth than the terrorist organizations or oppressive regimes would like us to have.

The protection of journalists, both in conflict and in peace, is an essential tenet of any functioning society. The freedom of journalists to report unhindered and unharmed is a vital tool to help hold authority to account. It is a building-block of an open society and an effective democracy. Sadly, this year we have seen 25 journalists killed around the world, and we are not even halfway through the year. To that number, we can add countless more who have been intimidated, injured, detained or kidnapped. The numbers keep growing. Only last week, in South Sudan, Pow James Raeth, a young talented radio journalist, was shot and killed with his friend Yohanes Pal Kwek as they crossed the street in Akobo. We offer our condolences to their friends and family and to those of all the journalists who have lost their lives this year.

We are also concerned by growing levels of harassment of journalists. Recent reports of intimidation and attacks on radio stations and newspapers in Burundi are a worrying example. We call on the Government there to promote an environment where journalists are free to report on political developments without fear of reprisal. The current media blackout will only serve to increase uncertainty and tension in an already fragile environment.

Today, journalists face new threats. The emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other violent extremist non-State actors has created new risks, both in conflict areas and in areas that were once seen as bastions of journalistic freedom. This has not been seen more clearly than in the brutal and senseless murder of 10 employees of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in January. Because of that single day of barbarism, more journalists have now died in France than any other country this year. Together with the high-profile killings of Steven Sotloff, Kenji Goto, James Foley and many others, it is clear that journalists have become even greater targets for terror, whether they are in a conflict area or not.

We must end impunity for those who target journalists. In 90 per cent of cases of murdered journalists, there are no convictions. That is not acceptable. Those who commit such crimes must be held to account, whoever they are. The failure of States to do so only perpetuates the culture of impunity and so precipitates further attacks. We welcome the fact that today the Council unanimously adopted the resolution urging Member States to conduct impartial, independent and effective investigations to bring perpetrators of crimes against journalists to justice.

As we implement resolution 2222 (2015), we must update our concept of journalism for the twenty-first century. In this world of Twitter and YouTube, there have been great changes to the way in which people receive news. We need to ensure that we also work to protect bloggers and social media activists. In Bangladesh, three secularist bloggers have already been murdered this year. The latest, Ananta Bijoy Das, was killed outside his home earlier this month. These deaths have created a culture of fear that has closed down the space for free speech in Bangladesh.

The United Kingdom is supporting countries to keep that space open. In the Sudan, we have funded 75 community correspondents in Kassala, El Gezira and Blue Nile states. They will help raise awareness of social issues and ensure that communities have a voice. In Tunisia, we are supporting the Government and media institutions in strengthening the legal and regulatory framework that protects media freedom. We call on all Member States to support journalists in whatever ways they can.

Resolution 2222 (2015) recognizes not only the need to protect journalists, but also the contribution that journalists can make to protecting others. Journalists risk life and limb to bring focus to some of the world's most pressing problems, and bring them to the attention of the world at large. Would we know the true horror of the Syrian conflict without the bravery of journalists willing to work in the region? They and so many others give voice to those who have lost their own.

It is therefore in the interests of us all to protect journalists and the work that they do. Through their investigations and reporting, the media can bring to light human rights violations. They can act as an early warning mechanism for impending conflict, atrocities or humanitarian disaster. Their insights from difficult and inaccessible places have spurred the international community to action on issues that otherwise might have been missed. Protecting journalists so that they can carry out this role in future is therefore a vital part of the work of the Council. Through resolution 2222 (2015) today, I believe that we have taken an important step towards recognizing that.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): My delegation commends the Lithuanian presidency for holding this open debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. We welcome you, Sir, and thank you for coming to New York to participate in this important debate. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson. We welcome the presence here of Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Mariane Pearl of the

Daniel Pearl Foundation and thank them for briefing the Council, and especially for sharing with us their very insightful remarks, which are an important contribution to our debate this morning.

While States bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, including journalists, as highlighted in resolution 1738 (2006), the international community has a subsidiary but very important role to play in addressing this very serious problem. Journalists face risks in conflict zones: abduction, hostage-taking, harassment, intidimidation, forced disappearance, arbitrary detention, torture and illegal arrest, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. According to Reporters Without Borders, in 2014 alone 69 journalists were killed in the discharge of their honourable duties. This year, 25 have been killed, 13 of them in countries on the Security Council's agenda: five in South Sudan, two in Iraq, two in Yemen, two in Ukraine, and one each in Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the majority of victims are male journalists, women are increasingly subject to violations of their integrity while performing their duties in conflict situations. Women journalists face additional risks related to, among other things, gender-based prejudices, sexual harassment and intimidation, and sexual violence and abuse in detention. This implies that there is a need for a gender-perspective approach when considering measures to address the issue of violence against journalists.

Nowadays, threats are not faced exclusively by traditional journalists. Those engaged in social media — bloggers and others using modern information technologies to communicate, disseminate information and express points of view — also frequently find themselves in danger.

Angola, my country, attaches great importance to the protection of civilians in conflict situations, and particularly to the protection of journalists, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, including the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Additional Protocols of 1977, in particular article 79 of Additional Protocol I regarding the protection of journalists in areas of armed conflict. In Angola, the freedom of information and expression is granted by the Constitution, which recognizes the right of all citizens to express, disseminate and freely share their thoughts, ideas and opinions by word, image or other means of communication. The Constitution also recognizes the right to freedom of information as the basis of a plural society in which the fundamental rights of citizens must be respected within the primacy of the law.

Journalists often draw attention to and witness grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, especially by reporting on situations that often amount to threats to international peace and security. We value the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, approved in 2012 by UNESCO, which has helped States to develop specific legislative mechanisms regarding the freedom of expression.

Despite the increased attention given by the international community and the States Members of the United Nations, and the Security Council's action on the issue, including the adoption of resolution 1738 (2006), violence against journalists persists. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians (S/2013/689) highlights the fact that accountability for the perpetrators of attacks against journalists is virtually non-existent. This is a situation that cannot prevail. Those responsible for violations and attacks against journalists must be held accountable. We believe that combating impunity is an important means of ensuring greater safety and protection for journalists in conflict zones. It is with dismay that we witness the current trend of threats against journalists,including the terror tactics of war used by some terrorist groups, such as the recent beheading of journalists in Syria by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

To conclude, we reiterate the important role that regional and subregional organizations can play in ensuring the protection of journalists and associated personnel in armed conflict, and the need to render more effective the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. We are convinced that journalists can play a very important role when reporting events with objectivity and professionalism. The Security Council should continue to pay more attention to the protection of journalists, and the Secretary-General could include more detailed information on the situation of journalists in conflicts zones, both in his reports on the protection of civilians and in his country-specific reports.

With respect to our adoption today of resolution 2222 (2015), which Angola co-sponsored, we think that the Council is pointing in the correct direction by acting on an area that has not yet been sufficiently covered.

For that, we again thank the Lithuanian presidency for bringing it to the Council.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation warmly welcomes you, Mr. President, as well as other ministers present here today. We are especially indebted to the delegation of Lithuania for organizing this important debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations and for the concept note provided to guide our discussions (S/2015/307, annex). We thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his briefing. Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Mariane Pearl have inspired us with their remarkable testimonies, and we are eternally grateful.

It is widely acknowledged that journalists play a vital role in keeping the international community informed about developments in situations of armed conflict. They sometimes do this at great risk to their lives. Journalists have been kidnapped, tortured and killed while reporting wars, riots, demonstrations and other civil disturbances. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, more than 1,129 journalists have been killed since 1992. Many others have been imprisoned or have disappeared. This underscores the grave dangers that journalists face in the line of duty and the need for the international community to continue to pay attention to issues that pertain to their protection.

Journalists in different and complex situations are offered the same level of protection under international humanitarian law as civilians. However, the reality on the ground is vastly different. It is evident that international norms have not been able to adequately protect journalists working in situations of armed conflicts. Clearly, then, much more needs to be done in order to ensure that these norms are upheld in order to grant journalists the protection that they deserve.

States bear the primary responsibility to protect journalists in conflict situations, and they must take decisive action in consonance with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Lack of action creates room for impunity on the part of offenders and increases the risk to journalists working in conflict zones. We do acknowledge, however, that conflicts often occur in an atmosphere of lawlessness where governance structures are weak and State authority is absent. It is in this political and security vacuum that terrorists, extremist groups and criminal networks present a major challenge in the protection of civilians, including journalists. These groups generally act with total disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law. This can be clearly seen in grave crimes being committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and other terrorist and extremist groups.

Nigeria acknowledges the importance that the Security Council attaches to the protection of journalists in conflict situations. The adoption of resolution 1738 (2006) was a milestone in the annals of the Council. Resolution 2222 (2015), which the Council adopted this morning, builds significantly on resolution 1738 (2006). It provides a framework for the United Nations and the international community to ensure the protection of journalists in situations of violent conflict.

Of particular significance is the request in the resolution that the Secretary-General include in his reports the issue of the safety of journalists as a sub-item of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We believe that this will raise the profile of this important subject in the context of the Security Council's engagement with the United Nations Secretariat. It will also allow the Council to closely monitor developments in conflict situations on its agenda and to assess the extent to which its resolutions pertaining to the protection of journalists are being implemented.

As a country steadily but resolutely consolidating its democratic institutions, Nigeria is committed to the rule of law. Indeed, Nigeria respects and upholds the rights of journalists to perform their duties without hindrance. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of thought. On 27 May 2011, the Nigerian National Assembly passed the Freedom of Information Bill, which the President signed into law the following day. The act reinforces the civil liberties enjoyed by journalists and promotes transparency and accountability in governance.

At the multilateral level, Nigeria has demonstrated its preparedness to collaborate with other States in the promotion of media freedom in the age of social media. This is especially exemplified by our role as one of the six lead sponsors of the first-ever Human Rights Council resolution on freedom of expression on the Internet (resolution 20/8), adopted by consensus on 5 July 2012 at the Council's twentieth session. The growing importance of the Internet as a means of disseminating and receiving information underscored our decision to work together with delegations of Brazil, Sweden, Turkey, Tunisia and the United States for the adoption of this landmark resolution. Today's resolution 2222 (2015) firmly builds on that scaffold.

The protection of journalists in conflict situations is a challenge for the international community. It requires a global effort, with all hands on deck. We encourage all United Nations Member States to create conditions suitable for journalists to carry out their essential work. On our part, we assure the international community of our firm and continuing commitment to engage with all stakeholders in furtherance of the protection of journalists.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the initiative of Lithuania to convene today's open debate on the protection of journalists in armed conflict. We welcome Foreign Minister Linkevičius as he comes to New York to preside over today's meeting. I wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Eliasson, for his briefing. China has listened attentively to the statements of the representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Journalists and media workers in armed conflicts constitute a special group. Devoted to their professional mandates and missions, they provide the public with their first-hand information at risk to their lives in armed conflicts. At the same time, they are defenceless and vulnerable civilians, constantly faced with the risks of being attacked, kidnapped and even deprived of their lives. We pay tribute to these journalists and media professionals who defy risks to their own safety when they venture into the foreground of armed conflict to provide coverage. In the past, numerous innocent journalists and media professionals have been attacked or even killed in armed conflicts. China strongly condemns any and all atrocities committed against journalists and media workers in armed conflicts, particularly deliberate attacks on and murder of journalists. We wish to extend our condolences to fallen journalists, media workers and their families. China calls upon the concerned parties to conflicts to put a true end to deliberate attacks and other atrocities against journalists and media workers. We support the international community in taking effective actions to protect journalists from being harmed in armed conflicts. I wish now to make the following five points.

First, protecting journalists in armed conflict is an important part of the protection of civilians. Journalists not involved in hostilities and conflicts should be protected under international humanitarian law, just like other civilians. The relevant Security Council resolutions and presidential statements on the protection of civilians have set forth the basic principles and created an important framework for protecting journalists from the harm of conflicts and as such they should be effectively observed. The comprehensive implementation of the aforementioned resolutions and presidential statements by the international community is an effective means for promoting the protection of journalists in armed conflicts.

Secondly, parties to conflict should seriously shoulder the important responsibility of protecting journalists in armed conflicts. They should, in line with their obligations under the Geneva Convention and other international law, effectively fulfil their responsibilities to protect journalists and prevent and stop atrocities from occurring. On the other hand, journalists and media workers should observe professional ethics and practice fairness and objectivity in their coverage. They should respect local cultural traditions and customs, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, observe the laws and regulations of host countries and refrain from becoming a party to conflicts. However, under no circumstances is any party allowed to inflict deliberate harm or atrocities upon journalists when they lawfully perform their working duties, no one, by law, is allowed to inflict deliberate harm or atrocities upon them. At the same time, when journalists and media workers enter areas of armed conflict, we hope they adopt an elevated sense of self-protection so as to avoid unnecessary casualties.

Thirdly, the international community should coordinate its fight against attacks and atrocities against journalists. The international community should, on the basis of respect for the judicial sovereignty of the countries concerned, step up its fight against deliberate attacks and atrocities against journalists in armed conflict, as these acts contravene international humanitarian law. A zero-tolerance policy should be adopted against deliberate attacks and atrocities committed against journalists in armed conflict, and perpetrators should meet with severe punishment. The United Nations should also strengthen its cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, taking advantage of their unique strengths so as to form international synergies.

Fourthly, the proper handling of atrocities committed against journalists by terrorist extremist forces is one of the important priorities in protecting journalists in armed conflicts. In recent years, there have been frequent instances of deliberate killings and atrocities committed against journalists by some terrorist and extremist forces. The international community should attach the highest priority to this problem by intensifying its fight against terrorism. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen coordination and cooperation in order to eliminate the fertile soil in which terrorist activities are bred and from which they are spread so as to eliminate the real threats faced by journalists in their work.

Fifthly, the various United Nations agencies should share out and coordinate their responsibilities and jointly promote the protection of journalists in armed conflict. China appreciates the efforts of UNESCO, the Human Rights Council and other agencies to safeguard and promote the lawful rights of journalists and strengthen their protection in armed conflict. It is hoped that the various United Nations agencies will work according to their respective mandates to form synergies in order to jointly create a safe environment for protecting journalists in armed conflict.

The Security Council shoulders the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, working effectively in the fields of peacekaing, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It has made positive contributions to attaining the goal of protecting civilians in armed conflict, in particular journalists and media workers. China is ready to work with the international community to push forward the comprehensive implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and presidential statements and contribute to realizing the goal of protecting journalists and media professionals in armed conflicts.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and thank the Lithuanian delegation for convening today's debate and the concept note (S/2015/307, annex). We also welcome the briefings by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders Christophe Deloire, and Ms. Mariane Pearl of the Daniel Pearl Foundation.

Today's debate concerns a central component in the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the need for caution in the application of universal principles and rights. Journalists and media workers require special attention because of the growing dangers and risks they face when they take on the responsibilities of bringing critical information to the community and of amplifying the voices of civil society. Resolution 2222 (2015) adopted today recognizes this concern and stresses the importance of the work of journalists, professionals of the media and associated personnel. Accordingly, my delegation joined in co-sponsoring it.

The year 2014 was marked by the threat, kidnapping and murder of journalists and the media workers in practically all armed conflicts. These attacks must not be understood solely as a violation of international humanitarian law but as a direct attack on human rights that seeks to curtail the right to freedom of expression and the right of citizens to be informed. Impunity for attacks on journalists and on the free exercise of the profession is unacceptable. It limits access to information, discourages work in conflict zones and creates fear of journalistic research and expression, all of which makes political and humanitarian crises invisible in public discourse, hindering an early response to conflict situations.

In addressing these scenarios and ensuring the adequate protection of journalists and media workers, we consider it important to increase international and regional cooperation and coordination through the exchange of best practices and technical assistance. In this regard, the implementation of the UNESCO's United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is crucial to promoting a safe and free environment for journalists and media workers, particularly in conflict situations, in order to contribute to international peace and security.

The right to freedom of expression, especially freedom of the press, is essential if there is to be an informed and active citizenry committed to the defence of democracy and peace. Similarly, freedom of expression and information facilitates the empowerment of women and their inclusion in various processes and in decision-making, thereby promoting equality.

Developing a catalogue of best practices and lessons learned for disseminating and exchanging experiences with other regions on a voluntary basis is a way to improve the security environment for journalists. On the other hand, in those scenarios where there are peacekeeping operations and special political missions, we call upon them to incorporate, in their periodic reports, monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses committed against them. The Organization can transfer, through its operations, missions and specialized agencies, capacities for adequately protecting journalists in conflict zones.

In conclusion, I reiterate our appreciation to the Lithuanian presidency for bringing this issue back to the Council for consideration, because in protecting journalists and their role, we are promoting conditions conducive to international peace and security, which is priority task for the Council, and strengthening the rule of law and democracy.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for presiding over this open debate and for your presence among us. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson; Mr. Christopher Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders; and Ms. Mariane Pearl, representative of the Daniel Pearl Foundation.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela condemns in the strongest possible terms acts violence against journalists covering armed conflict, and calls for full respect for the international humanitarian law that protects them as civilians, in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention. In recent years, particularly given the proliferation and strengthening of terrorist groups in various regions of the Middle East and Africa, we have witnessed how the practice of journalism has become more dangerous, claiming the lives of many and, in some cases, with a brutality that has served to instil fear. We need only recall the perversity of the beheadings committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and its media savvy to understand the danger facing humankind, including journalists. This practice is a reality that we regret and repudiate, and we call for those responsible for such heinous acts to be brought to justice.

Journalists in armed conflicts incur significant risks by denouncing the atrocities perpetrated by the warring parties, which in many instances makes them the military targets of non-State and State actors, in violation of international humanitarian law. During the 51 days of the Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip in 2014, 2,220 civilians were killed, of whom 17 were journalists — 16 Palestinians and an Italian photographer.

Resolution 1738 (2006) helped to address this issue in the framework of the protection of civilians, including journalists. We believe that international humanitarian law provides an appropriate platform for the protection of professional journalists in armed conflicts, in their civilian capacity. Our country will continue to advocate tirelessly for the construction of a democratic environment in journalism with a social service orientation, denouncing the manipulation of information and emphasizing ethics and responsibility in communications as essential foundations for achieving world peace. In that regard, the protection of journalists is our priority.

Venezuela reaffirms the position expressed on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement at its ministerial meeting in Algeria in May 2014, in which it called for the responsible use and treatment of information by the media in accordance with codes of conduct and professional ethics in all their forms. It should be recalled that the world has lived through sad episodes like that in Rwanda, where the irresponsible and politically motivated use of the media fueled mass hatred against other ethnic groups and the radio was used as a tool to accelerate the genocide against the Tutsi under fallacious and discriminatory arguments that only amplified the logic of death.

In 1980, UNESCO published the report entitled *Many Voices One World*, also known as the MacBride report, which set out the basic elements for creating a new world order of communication and information. Its recommendations are now more relevant than ever. They include adherence to ethical principles, the facts and the transmission of truth above the interests of the owners of the media, which are guided more by economic and political interests than by respect for the responsibility to report.

It should be noted that seven global corporations control over 80 per cent of communications throughout the world. This being so, the balanced distribution of information is hindered beyond conflict zones where the interests of the corporate media respond to or coincide with those of major Powers involved politically or militarily in the conflict. In recent history, the corporate media have blatantly distorted reality by making tendentious use of facts in order to influence public opinion on behalf of the political and military interests of certain countries. In the case of Iraq, I recall the resort to the excuse of the existence of weapons of mass destruction that proved in time to be non-existent, and the role of such corporations to justify the invasion of that country in 2003. Unfortunately, that practice has not changed. Today, the same patterns of misinformation are being trotted out in the treatment of conflicts afflicting the Middle East and Africa.

I wish to draw a clear distinction between journalists and the corporate media. We pay tribute to the honest and dangerous work done by professional journalists who risk their lives in conflict situations for the right and duty to report.

Finally, the work of journalists in conflict zones is key to describing the evolution of events in which civilian lives are subject to the actions of armed actors. Journalists are called on to contribute with the truth to the building of world of peace. Society requires journalism to be practiced in a balanced and impartial manner. We must protect and guarantee the physical safety and lives of journalists so that they can play their full roll in society.

The President: I remind speakers to kindly limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to ensure that we can complete our work expeditiously. I also appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a moderate speed so that interpretation can be provided properly.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

Mr. Rinkēvičs (Latvia): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this very timely debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. Let me also thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Mariane Pearl for their informative briefings and tireless work on this very complex subject.

As early as 1946, at its very first session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 59 (I), affirming that freedom of information is the cornerstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is committed. The right of freedom of expression depends upon the safety of journalists and media professionals. Furthermore, the work done by journalists contributes to increased accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

Dramatic changes in the media landscape, in particular the introduction of new technologies, have resulted in an unprecedented flow of information, including from conflict settings. The independent voices of journalists and reports from conflict zones give the international community a unique insight into realities on the ground. They serve as a catalyst for rapid and effective response, and are therefore vital to the survival of a conflict-affected society. In this context, it is extremely important not only to safeguard but to strengthen the ability of the media to provide independent and reliable information.

Freedom of expression, both offline and online, and strengthening the independence of media are long-standing priorities of Latvia. We promote them as a part of our presidency of the Council of the European Union and in international organizations, including at the Human Rights Council. At the beginning of May, a conference to mark UNESCO World Press Freedom Day took place in Riga. The resulting Riga declaration underlines our commitment to promote a legal and institutional environment that ensures the safety of journalists, the urgent need to end impunity for crimes against journalists and media workers, and the essential contribution of journalists to the enjoyment of all human rights and the pursuit of sustainable development.

The international community has addressed the protection of journalists in conflict areas on numerous occasions. In 2006, the Security Council adopted resolution 1738 (2006), which calls for urgent action. More recently, the Human Rights Council and UNESCO have made the protection of journalists a top priority. Latvia endorses those efforts, especially the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which is not only a statement of ideals, but a tool for change. Unfortunately, today the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity are once again at the top of the international agenda.

Deliberate attempts to target journalists in conflict zones continue to increase in scale and number. Even though journalists working in conflict zones have the status of civilians and enjoy a range of protection guarantees, they continue to face manifold threats, including assassination, harassment, intimidation and kidnapping. Such attacks constitute a clear breach of international humanitarian law. Threats posed by terrorist and radical extremist groups against journalists have also become a major challenge. Nor should we ignore the fact that women journalists are particularly vulnerable and require special attention. For all those reasons, the adoption of the resolution 2222 (2015) today, which addresses the new challenges to the safety of journalists, is of particular importance and we praise this achievement.

While there is clarity on what we would like to achieve, there is uncertainty on how to accomplish it. I believe that there are four elements that are essential. First, there must be clear political will, which is at the heart of any successful Government strategy. Secondly, there must be a comprehensive, coherent and action-oriented approach to the protection of all civilians, including journalists, in conflict situations. Thirdly, there must be a broad strategy for conflict prevention that includes as its cornerstone the promotion of freedom of expression and access to information and media freedom. Such an approach calls for training programmes for journalists and the active involvement of civil society. And fourthly, there must be an enhanced role for United Nations peacekeeping operations and strengthened international and regional cooperation.

Now is the time when international organizations, Governments, media and others should work together to strengthen the means and mechanisms for protecting journalists and holding accountable those who attack them. If there is one message today's meeting sends to journalists in conflict zones, this is it. Only through our common efforts will we ensure that no journalist in the twenty-first century, offline or online, is attacked, intimidated and/or sealed off from the rest of the world by a new iron curtain.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): First, I would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for convening this high-level open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, with a specific focus on the protection of journalists. I also thank your delegation for submitting a concept note (S/2015/307, annex) on the topic. We are also grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing on the matter.

Under international humanitarian law, journalists in armed conflict are classified as civilians, and as such should be afforded the same protection. That norm was recalled in resolution 1738 (2006), the presidential statement of 12 February 2013 (S/PRST/2013/2) and the Council's resolution 2222 (2015), just adopted. It is also widely recognized that the rule according to which civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities, constitutes a norm of customary international law applicable in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

Indeed, existing rules as well as other important efforts undertaken at the international level, including in particular by the Security Council, provide a solid basis for protection. At the same time, there is a significant gap between the normative standards and their implementation. The current state of the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict, including journalists, leaves little room for optimism. Attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in armed conflicts continue, while impunity for perpetrators remains widespread and represents the biggest obstacle to ensuring the safety of journalists.

We pay tribute to journalists who under dangerous circumstances bravely perform their duties to inform the broader public about threats to international peace and security. The increased brutality of armed conflicts and the changing nature of warfare and terrorist and separatist threats nowadays give rise to the need for greater measures of protection for journalists at the national and international levels. Apart from preventive diplomacy efforts and the earliest peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts, the best deterrent, is, undoubtedly, ensuring a speedy end to impunity and holding to account those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law. Such violations also give rise to the right of victims to an effective remedy. Moreover, as the Secretary-General notes in his most recent report (S/2013/689), accountability should also be understood more broadly as encompassing the political, legal and moral responsibility of individuals and institutions for past violations.

It is obvious that the problem cannot be addressed effectively unless there is a willingness on the part of States and the broader international community to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the existing norms and rules are fully respected and implemented and that those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law are brought to justice. Commitments to protection efforts must be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches.

The war waged against Azerbaijan by neighbouring Armenia claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians, including a number of journalists who were killed as a result of deliberate attacks when reporting from the conflict zone. In its relevant resolutions, the Security Council condemns the violations of international humanitarian law committed during the conflict, including attacks on civilians and the bombardment of inhabited areas. However, the perpetrators of those violations, among them the members of the political and military leadership of Armenia, continue to enjoy impunity, and such a situation represents a serious challenge both to upholding individual rights and freedoms and to ensuring sustainable peace, justice, truth and reconciliation. Therefore, the international community should play a more proactive role when national authorities fail to take the steps necessary to ensure accountability.

It is important that the Security Council consistently maintain its focus on the topic and systematically recall its demand that all parties to armed conflict comply fully with their obligations under international law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including journalists, and that they take all the necessary measures to prevent attacks against journalists and to prosecute those responsible for such attacks.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly comment on the remarks made by the delegation of the United States with regard to Azerbaijan.

First, the reference to the ongoing criminal case against Mr. Ismayilova has nothing in common with the topic of today's open debate, which is the protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict.

Secondly, the remarks on the aforementioned criminal case are irrelevant also in the view of the mandate of the Security Council, an organ on which the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies.

Thirdly, the reference to individual criminal cases continues interference into the responsibilities of the law enforcement agencies. Attempts to politicize the investigation of such cases represent a challenge to the independence of the judiciary in a sovereign State.

Fourthly, it would be more appropriate, in the context of the topic of today's open debate, if the delegation of the United States would recall the names of other journalists from Azerbaijan, among them Salatin Esgerova, Chingiz Mustafayev, Ali Mustafayev and Osman Mirzoev, who were killed during Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan while performing their professional duties in the conflict zone. The perpetrators of the crimes committed against those journalists continue to enjoy impunity. We have not noticed that the Government of the United States has ever cared about those cases.

Finally, I would like once again to commend the initiative of Lithuania in convening this high-level open debate to review the implementation of resolution 1738 (2013) and lessons learned.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): I thank you, Madam President, for having convened this timely debate. I am also grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson; Mr. Christophe Deloire, from Reporters Without Borders; and Ms. Mariane Pearl, from the Daniel Pearl Foundation, for their informative presentations.

Brazil strongly condemns all deliberate attacks against media professionals, regardless of their motivation. As we know, international humanitarian law enshrines the safeguard of both accredited war correspondents, who are entitled to prisoner-of-war status, and other journalists, who benefit from the same comprehensive rights and protections granted to civilians in situations of armed conflict.

By adopting resolution 1738 (2006), the Council urged States and all other parties to an armed conflict to prevent violations of international humanitarian law against civilians, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel. In areas controlled by non-State actors and terrorist groups, this issue acquires a special dimension, as pointed out in the concept note presented by Lithuania (S/2015/307, annex). We should redouble our efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of crimes against journalists and to bring to justice those who broadcast incitement to genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations.

While the safety of all media professionals is a matter of concern, there is a fundamental distinction to be made between, on the one hand, threats to journalists who report from armed conflicts and, on the other, acts of violence against journalists in circumstances that do not constitute armed conflicts.

When media professionals are endangered by a situation that constitutes a threat to international peace and security, the Council has a clear role to play; conversely, other bodies of the United Nations are responsible for promoting a secure environment for journalists in times of peace. Positive examples of the latter domain include the General Assembly, which has proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists; the Human Rights Council and its resolutions on the safety of journalists; and UNESCO, which plays a key role in implementing the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The Security Council should respect these different initiatives and observe the necessary discipline in this regard.

The safety and security of journalists can also be jeopardized by indiscriminate surveillance of their professional communication. Media personnel need to protect the privacy, integrity and anonymity of their sources, particularly in conditions of armed conflict. Besides violating fundamental human rights, undermining the foundations of democracy and challenging the sovereignty of States, secret surveillance programmes also endanger those whose very survival may depend on the confidentiality of their identity or sources, such as investigative journalists reporting from war-torn regions or areas controlled by terrorist groups.

Let me recall the latest report (A/69/397) of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Ben Emmerson. The document underlines the fact that bulk access technology is indiscriminately corrosive of online privacy and therefore poses a direct and ongoing challenge to an established norm of international law.

Brazil commends the Human Rights Council for establishing the post of a Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, focusing on the challenges arising from the digital age and new technologies. We were honoured to facilitate and introduce Human Rights Council resolution 28/16, which established the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy.

The first victim of war is truth, and it is always important to distinguish journalism from propaganda. A free, independent and pluralistic media is not only vital to upholding democracy and promoting human rights; it is also an indispensable instrument to disseminate information and alert public opinion to the tragedy of war and its humanitarian consequences. Accomplishing this essential duty requires shielding journalists from harassment and harm. Yet the assignments of media professionals in armed conflicts are increasingly perilous, as highlighted by the latest report of the Secretary-General on the safety of journalism and the issue of impunity (A/69/268), and far too many journalists have been killed in the line of duty.

In conclusion, Brazil reiterates its commitment to the vital endeavour of protecting all journalists and media personnel in situations of armed conflict. We all have a stake in the well-being of journalists, who selflessly risk their lives in order to inform the international community, including the Security Council itself, about the complex realities of armed conflict.

Brazil fully endorses the initiatives of the Security Council, within its Charter responsibilities and in coherence with the efforts of other multilateral bodies, to that end. Allow me to quote the Secretary-General's statement marking World Press Freedom Day, celebrated on 3 May: "Let us honour the memory of those who lost their lives, and intensify our efforts to uphold the fundamental human right to freedom of expression and press freedom".

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank you, Madam President, and once again congratulate Lithuania for its very effective and impactful tenure in the Security Council. I wish also to thank you for holding this important debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations and thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his valuable briefing and Mr. Christophe Deloire and Ms. Mariane Pearl for their compelling testimonies, each of which underscored the indispensable role that journalists play in bearing witness to conflict and the increasingly heavy price that is paid for conveying information.

Sweden fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

We remain deeply concerned by the high number of acts of violence against journalists and other media professionals. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right. It is an essential part of democracy and helps shape our understanding of the world, but is not to be taken for granted; it has to be fought for every day.

We all know that journalists in areas of armed conflict are to be considered as civilians under international humanitarian law and therefore respected and protected as such. Resolution 1738 (2006) recalled this fact and promised increased attention to the issue of protecting journalists in armed conflict. Unfortunately, the safety of journalists is becoming increasingly threatened. Journalists who are reporting from conflict areas, but also human rights defenders and others promoting freedom of expression, including new media, are ever more frequently falling victim to attacks, persecution and abuse.

Syria provides a tragic illustration of, inter alia, the perils associated with reporting from areas of conflict. Swedish journalists were abducted but were recently freed. However, we fully realize that others have been less fortunate, and we are appalled by the number of journalists who have lost their lives, including a

Japanese journalist at the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant earlier this year.

We, the international community, have an obligation to react and to take further steps to prevent violence and to promote a safe environment for journalists and other media actors. I would like to highlight three points in particular.

First, we must continue to demand and explore ways to ensure that the protection awarded to journalists under international law is fully respected and upheld. We welcome the adoption once again by the Third Committee of a draft resolution on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, in November 2014, as well as the resolution on the protection of journalists adopted by the Human Rights Council this past September.

The Security Council, as well as the entire United Nations peacebuilding architecture, can also play important roles by including protection of journalists as part of the support to rule-of-law institutions in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, and by reacting when violations are being committed.

Secondly, impunity must not be tolerated. It is primarily the responsibility of Governments to protect journalists, human rights defenders and others promoting freedom of expression, including our new media, and to allow them to carry out their work independently, without undue interference and without fear of violence or persecution. But protection alone is not enough and States must ensure accountability when crimes have been committed. The most serious deficiency is not a lack of rules but a failure to implement existing ones and to systematically investigate, prosecute and punish violations.

Thirdly, preventive action is needed in order to promote the safety of journalists and to fight impunity. We also need to address the root causes of violence against journalists. Well functioning and open institutions are fundamental in that regard. In a way, media freedom is a litmus test for any society and its absence can serve as an early warning sign of emerging conflict. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, with its focus on national capacity-building, deserves to be highlighted in that context. We of course encourage its full implementation.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7450 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7450th meeting

Wednesday, 27 May 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Jakubonė/Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Casimiro
	Chad	Mr. Mohamed Mohamed
	Chile	Mr. Espinoza
	China	Ms. Chen Qingru
	France	Mr. Cabouat
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mr. Rosdi
	New Zealand	Ms. McDowell
	Nigeria	Mr. Aliyu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Spain	Ms. Del Río Novo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Robbins
	United States of America	Mr. DiBiase
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Guerra Sansonetti

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The protection of journalists in conflict situations

Letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/307)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document

Please recycle

The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Dondua (Georgia): I would like to begin by thanking the Lithuanian presidency and, personally, my good friend Minister Linkevičius, for bringing this important issue back to the Council. Today's discussion is timely, especially since there has been only one debate on the matter (see S/PV.7003), two years ago, following the landmark resolution 1738 (2006). We believe the Council should address this important issue more actively and frequently, as we face an ever-increasing and worrying trend of violence against journalists in both conflict and non-conflict situations, including by non-State actors.

Timely and credible information is an essential tool for the international community to adequately assess a situation and, where possible, to prevent or respond to an emerging crisis. It would therefore be no overstatement to say that the information obtained by journalists often contributes directly to international peace and security. We note with deep concern that the number of journalists killed while doing their job has been consistently increasing in recent years. The most brutal and appalling examples are the recent beheadings of journalists by Daesh.

Areas controlled by non-State actors and terrorist groups, as well as territories under foreign occupation, are zones of high risk for journalists, with threats to their lives from actors operating in total denial of established legal norms. Regrettably, my country is one of those that has witnessed the death of journalists on its soil, during the 2008 war with Russia. Along with other civilians, three journalists were killed and four wounded while exercising their professional functions, including a Dutch journalist who died in a Russian missile strike on civilian targets on 12 August 2008. Barbed-wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line have been installed, not only to disrupt people-to-people contacts and humanitarian access, but also to prevent journalists from entering the occupied territories and shedding light on the dire human rights situation on the ground. In April 2014, the occupation troops illegally detained three journalists from a Georgian television channel who were working on a report about the installation of barbed-wire fences in the area. None of those cases was subjected to a proper investigation, owing to a lack of political will on the part of the authorities in effective control.

Unfortunately, such is the trend worldwide. Appalling findings are set out in the Secretary-General's latest report on the protection of civilians (S/2013/689). The perpetrators were apprehended and prosecuted in less than 5 per cent of the cases, and accountability for perpetrators of attacks on journalists is virtually non-existent. We believe that the United Nations should start to counter this dangerous tendency by declaring unequivocally that a regime of military occupation cannot serve as an excuse from the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently, without undue interference or fear of censorship, persecution or prosecution. We should redouble our efforts to increase the effectiveness of the existing legal and political means to that end.

In that context, we commend the work of the Human Rights Council, which last September adopted by consensus resolution 27/5, on the safety of journalists. We welcome the fact that the resolution is focused on ending impunity. It sends a critical and unambiguous message that there is no excuse for allowing attacks against and murders of journalists and media workers to go unpunished. We call on Member States where journalists are at risk to heed the specific legal and policy measures set out in the resolution and implement them without delay, in close cooperation with the United Nations, other relevant international entities, civil society organizations and journalistic networks.

We share the view that identifying journalists as a special category of persons that should be protected in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions is an important first step in ensuring their protection.To that end, given the critical role of the Secretary-General, and while encouraging him to continue including the issue of the protection of journalists in armed conflict in his reports on the protection of civilians, we would also suggest considering the possibility of specific reporting by the Secretary-General on the subject.

Another worrying development is related to the manipulation of information. Where State-run mass media are engaged in fierce propaganda that encourages extreme forms of nationalism and violent ideology while attempting to justify the grabbing and annexing of foreign lands, social radicalization and militarization become normal phenomena.

In conclusion, may I once again express my country's firm commitment and readiness to actively contribute to and support the freedom of expression and the safety of journalists worldwide, as they constitute the cornerstone of free and pluralistic media.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Linas Antanas Linkevičius for his initiative in organizing this open debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Christophe Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders, and Ms. Mariane Pearl for their respective briefings.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 27 journalists have been killed so far this year, including Japanese journalist Kenji Goto. Attacks against journalists are not just attacks against individual persons, but also affronts to the ideals of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, which are the foundations of democracy. Japan is absolutely set against such acts of depravity and is determined to work together with international society to prevent further tragedies.

The perpetrator commonly known as Jihadi John murdered Mr. Kenji Goto, Mr. James Foley, Mr. David Haines and many others. He, together with other perpetrators, continues to walk freely under blue skies. Japan strongly condemns those despicable acts of terror. We must hold the perpetrators responsible for their deplorable acts and bring them to justice.

The reality, however, is grim. Less than 5 per cent of well-known perpetrators have actually been apprehended and prosecuted in the past 10 years, despite continuing reaffirmations in numerous United Nations resolutions of our determination to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators. In the light of that circumstance, Japan appreciates the decision of the Security Council to adopt a new resolution on the matter (resolution 2222 (2015)). But we should not stop there.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is included in the mandates of 10 ongoing peacekeeping operations. Journalists are civilians; therefore, it is the duty of United Nations peacekeepers to protect journalists under their mandates. We should go a little further. As the concept note for this open debate (S/2015/307, annex) suggests, we should recall that journalists are subject to protection under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocol I, in order to ensure their security. Identifying journalists as a special category in the text of resolutions would increase awareness and eventually save more journalists' lives.

Japan recognizes the significant role of the reports of the Secretary-General on both peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians, which would include information on the situation regarding journalists' safety.

In February, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe, made a statement in which he resolutely condemned those impermissible and outrageous acts of terrorism. Japan will never give in to terrorism. Mr. Abe has pledged assistance totalling some $200 million for those countries contending with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), to help build human capacity, infrastructure, et cetera. Japan will steadfastly fulfil its responsibility in the international community in combating terrorism.

At the time of the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1738 (2006), the safety of journalists in areas under the control of brutal non-State actors and terrorist groups such as ISIL was not on the list of agenda items. Now, it is time to address this significant issue, which cannot be overlooked. The Security Council must take decisive measures to tackle the issue of serious crimes committed by non-State actors and extremist groups and never allow any impunity for such perpetrators.

International society must fight against acts of terror so that the foundational values of contemporary democracy, including freedom of expression and freedom of the press, shall not be shaken. Japan has committed itself to engaging in that endeavour of great importance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mrs. Gatto (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

I thank Lithuania for convening this meeting and proposing a new resolution (resolution 2222 (2015)) on the important subject of the protection of journalists in armed conflict.

I will refrain from repeating a basic fact, namely, that journalists are increasingly subject to all kinds of hostile acts, including torture and killing. We have all heard the details. I do wish, however, to remember the Italian journalists who have made the ultimate sacrifice in many theaters of war, most recently in Ukraine, Gaza and Afghanistan. They shall not be forgotten.

In paying tribute to our own victims, let us not forget that most of the journalists who have lost their lives are local.

Journalists are a distinct category by virtue of the social function they perform. For example, many issues make it onto the agenda of the Security Council thanks to brave reporters and their ability to draw the attention of international public opinion to some of the grave crises in the world today. When we speak of armed-conflict scenarios, that unique ability merits full protection.

Thanks to resolution 1738 (2006) and to resolution 2222 (2015), which we have just adopted and which Italy co-sponsored, awareness has been raised that journalists need to be protected just as much as regular civilians, in accordance with the provisions of humanitarian law. In conflict situations, journalists are not just civilians; they are our gateway to the world — to both the good and the bad of the world. The protection they deserve as human beings stems also from the precious gift of information they provide to all of us.

That leads me to a second reflection: what if journalists have different or even unorthodox views? We believe that is a good thing. Journalists bring diverse opinions to their work. That is why we need many of them, because many eyes and many brains will provide many different perspectives, leaving it to readers and listeners to make up their minds on the basis of a variety of sources. That is the benefit of pluralism, which depends on freedom of the press and of expression. That is what we call impartial information. It is a treasure that journalists offer to us every day, every minute and every second. We have to protect and encourage pluralism.

My third point stems from the troubling rise in the number of journalists abducted, killed, blackmailed, tortured and even raped — a crime to which women journalists in particular are prey. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/689), all too often, impunity seems to be the rule in hostile situations where journalists are victims. That is unacceptable. Greater efforts must be made to ensure that perpetrators of any attack or hostile act towards them are brought to justice.

My final point is that journalists, especially when they are reporting on armed-conflict scenarios, render an invaluable service to all those who work to promote peace and security. However, the more dangerous conflict situations become for journalists, the less people will be willing to choose that career, resulting in less information and less pluralism. We cannot accept that the self-censorship implicit in threats to personal safety might undermine the richness of pluralism.

The protection of journalists in dangerous situations is a multifaceted question. The answer should be holistic, starting with the recognition that journalists deserve full protection. On that basis, we must pursue an action-oriented strategy.

I would like to end with two proposals. First, education, which is a key word in many fields, is one here as well. Most journalist victims of hostile acts are local. That may be due to a lack of proper training on how to work in dangerous situations. We should fill that gap. Secondly, with regard to non-State actors, specific attention should be given to situations in which non-State actors are the perpetrators of hostile acts against journalists, which seems to be increasingly the case. In that context as well, we have to respond by drafting ad hoc strategies.

I conclude by underscoring the important role that all countries as well as the bodies of the United Nations can play in promoting this agenda. We have to act together. Let us engage collectively.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): My delegation would like to commend and thank your delegation, Madam President, for organizing today's very timely debate.

I will not repeat some of the basic facts and figures that we heard this morning, but I would like to emphasize that local journalists, freelancers and women are in a particularly vulnerable position. Female journalists encounter abuses similar to those met by their male counterparts, but they have also endured appalling levels of sexual violence. Despite those obstacles, female journalists have continued to display impressive dedication to their work, relaying important stories of people caught in some of the world's deadliest conflicts, such as the one in Syria.

The Council has an important role to play in promoting the safety of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in conflict situations. It is not just an important aspect of the Council's work on the protection of civilians, it is also an issue of self-interest for the Council. After all, the Council itself has to rely on information received from journalists. Such independent reporting is particularly crucial in situations of escalated violent conflict, when other reliable sources of information may be hard to come by.

In considering the Council's role, we must recognize the dramatic changes in the world's media landscape. Technology has altered the ways we consume news, social media has opened new channels for distribution of information, and smartphones have fuelled the rise of the citizen journalist. Furthermore, some extremist groups consider journalists as enemies rather than neutral observers. They will not hesitate to target them openly, just as they routinely disregard other basic rules of international humanitarian law.

It is therefore time for the Council to pay greater attention to the protection of journalists. We particularly welcome the adoption of the resolution today (resolution 2222 (2015)) and its strong references to international humanitarian law, which guarantees equal protection for journalists and civilians. In many conflict zones, however, respect for international humanitarian law has completely eroded. We strongly support efforts aimed at increasing compliance with international humanitarian law for this reason and many others, in particular the joint initiative by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Switzerland.

Attacks against journalists in conflict situations are not only serious violations of international humanitarian law, but also in and of themselves are attacks on the freedom of expression. Governments are obliged to protect journalists as a matter of human rights law. We must increase our efforts towards accountability for those crimes, with a view to increasing deterrence. The primary responsibility in that regard falls upon domestic justice systems. The International Criminal Court, where it has jurisdiction or such jurisdiction is conferred by the Security Council, could also play an important role.

I should also say that media organizations also have an obligation to help ensure the safety of journalists in armed conflict. Proper training and resources must be made available to local staff, freelancers and international war correspondents alike.

The freedom of expression and of information are essential human rights and are among the main pillars of a free society. The work of journalists is also an indispensable tool for the Council, be it in the context of early warning and prevention or in the middle of violent conflict. Their activities are not only under fire by missiles and bullets, but are also threatened by other means: illegal surveillance, censorship, reprisals and violence. Oppressive Governments and groups wage silent wars by suppressing access to information and imprisoning those who dare to report the facts. Countering those actions should be high on the Council's agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. I shall deliver a shortened version of our statement. The full text will be found on our website. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I want to thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Council for bringing back this important issue to this forum. Let me also thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing, and Mariane Pearl and Christophe Deloire for their testimonies.

We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2222 (2015) on the topic of this debate.

At the time of the last Security Council debate (see S/PV.7003) we regretted the high number of journalists killed while doing their jobs. Sadly, today we cannot but note that this figure continues to increase with an unparalleled level of viciousness shown by the barbaric executions committed by Daesh.

The freedom of opinion and of expression are fundamental rights of every human being. Indispensable for individual dignity and fulfilment, they also constitute essential foundations for democracy, the rule of law, peace, stability, sustainable inclusive development and participation in public affairs. Journalists' work often puts them at specific risk of intimidation and violence. Such attacks and intimidation are not only an attack on the victim, but also on the very essence of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

States must take active steps to prevent violence and to promote a safe environment for journalists and other media actors, thereby enabling them to carry out their work independently, without undue interference and without fear of violence or persecution. The EU attaches the highest priority to the safety of journalists and other media actors and encourages all States to take all the appropriate steps to ensure the protection of journalists, both in terms of preventive measures and by urging effective investigations when violations or abuses occur. In that context, the April 2015 Doha Declaration includes language calling for States to act in that regard.

European Union member States subscribe to freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, on which the European Union is based. Accession to the European Union is based on the adherence to those principles, which include the freedom of expression, of opinion and of information. We all have an obligation to react to the worrying trend of the increased level of intimidation and violence that journalists, media actors and other individuals face in many countries across the world because of their job. In that context, we must not forget that female journalists are more often subject to harassment and sexual violence. The EU has repeatedly condemned attacks against journalists and bloggers through several public statements, in other international forums, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and in the framework of the European Union's bilateral relations with third countries.

The European Union is also active in supporting concrete actions in the field of the protection of journalists, including in countries in crisis. For example, we have funded a programme to protect journalists and bloggers, especially young and inexperienced ones, providing them with administrative, material or financial support when needed. The programme also provides judicial support for journalists and bloggers who are detained or facing trial and, in the most extreme cases, moves them to a safe location. We also have an emergency fund scheme to protect human rights defenders, including journalists, which was recently expanded to help cyberdissidents build self-protection skills.

The protection of journalists and support for independent media are also among the top priorities of the European Endowment for Democracy, which is supporting independent media and journalists, including bloggers, social media activists, et cetera, in the EU neighbourhood and beyond.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right to the freedom of expression and information. The Council of Europe launched an Internet platform aimed at protecting journalism and promoting the safety of journalists. The platform is a reliable tool to compile, process and disseminate factual data in Council of Europe member States, verified by independent partners, concerning physical threats to journalists or risk to the confidentiality of media sources, as well as other forms of intimidation. It also enables the initiation of a dialogue with the States concerned on possible remedies and protective measures.

We must recall that, according to international humanitarian law, journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians and shall be respected and protected as such. We call on all parties to armed conflict to respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto. We furthermore call on all parties to conflict to allow, within the framework of applicable rules and procedures, media access and coverage in situations of international and non-international armed conflict.

Almost half of the journalists killed in 2014 died in the Middle East. Approximately 38 per cent of the total died in combat or cross-fire. That clearly shows that more are killed outside of combat. Although it is vital that we protect journalists and media actors in conflict, we must also ensure their safety outside of combat. They serve an invaluable role in preventing conflict and holding Governments to account. The EU condemns any Government that intimidates or suppresses independent and free press.

We encourage the Secretary-General to continue including the issue of the protection of journalists in armed conflicts in his reports on the protection of civilians, and encourage peacekeeping and special political missions to also include this issue in existing reporting, as relevant. We also encourage the Security Council to address the protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict, including through public statements.

The Council is not alone in addressing this issue. The General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have adopted annual consensual resolutions on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. In that context, the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, a work led by UNESCO with the aim of greater cooperation among United Nations organizations, is a key document.

If today we are discussing this matter, it is not because the United Nations is not paying attention to the issue. It is, first, because States are not doing enough to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to work independently, without undue interference and without fear of censorship, persecution or prosecution; and, secondly, because they need to do more to bring to justice the perpetrators of attacks on journalists.

Let me conclude by expressing the European Union's tribute to, and support for, all those who fight for the respect of freedom of expression and for a free, pluralistic press and other media.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Bamrungphong (Thailand): Thailand is participating in this important debate because it shares the international community's concern at the increasing direct attacks against civilians, including journalists, particularly those committed by non-State actors and terrorist groups. We therefore thank Lithuania for its initiative to discuss this issue and for the detailed concept note (S/2015/307, annex). We also appreciate the informative briefings by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, Mr. Christophe Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders, and Ms. Mariane Pearl.

It is clearly stated in rule 34 of the International Committee of the Red Cross Customary International Humanitarian Law that civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities. Hence a deliberate act of violence against journalists in armed conflict in all forms is unacceptable and unjustifiable. An attack deliberately targeted at civilians amounts to a war crime, and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Impunity emboldens perpetrators to continue their brutal acts and inflames the situation. The ending of impunity is one of the suppressing factors. Thailand is alarmed by statistical evidence that there are no convictions in 90 per cent of cases of attacks against journalists. This issue must not remain unaddressed. Ending impunity must begin at national level, encompassing political will, the strengthening of the judicial system and effective law enforcement. Cooperation and sharing of information among law enforcement authorities at all levels needs to be enhanced and strengthened. We share the view that legal frameworks and mechanisms are sufficiently in place, but they must be efficiently enforced and fully implemented.

Thailand also sees the need to increase the number of independent commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions in order to bring to justice those who have committed brutal acts against civilians and journalists. The Security Council must be clear and strong in its messages and resolutions that violations against civilians and journalists will not be tolerated.

Targeted sanctions imposed on individuals and entities involved in heinous crimes against civilians are among the tools the Council may apply. However, doing so must ensure fair and clear procedures for placing individuals and entities on sanction lists, and for removing them. And sanctions need to be fully implemented by Member States.

The safety of journalists is at highest risk in terrorist-controlled areas. Thailand joins the call for all parties to respect and uphold international norms and laws to protect civilians and journalists. However, it may be ironic and unrealistic to expect that those who intentionally defy the law by committing unlawful acts of violence and terror for their tactical objectives to respect the law. What else can we do to protect civilians and journalists in such circumstances?

Thailand supports mandating peacekeeping missions to protect civilians. Apart from physical protection, guidance and regular assessment of a situation by peacekeeping operations could provide useful information and reliable alerts for journalists and media professionals on the ground. Engagement between journalists and peacekeeping operations would help to increase the safety of journalists, and would by no means change their civilian and independent status owing to the principle of the impartiality of the peacekeeping operation. At the same time, journalists and media professionals should strictly follow the guidance of the peacekeeping operation for their own safety.

To protect journalists, several issues need further deliberation. While totally understanding the freedom, responsibility and rights of the media, their safety cannot be compromised. There should be a clear guideline on when they should leave conflict zones to limit the risk. For the safety of journalists in some active conflict zones, we may need to replace the presence of correspondents with modern technology and equipment. That may not be a perfect substitute, but it may be considered as an alternative to prevent the loss of life.

I wish to conclude by paying tribute to journalists and media professionals who risk or have lost their lives to provide us with substantive and real-time information from the ground. Their responsible and constructive role can greatly contribute throughout the conflict cycle — from conflict prevention, to conflict management and conflict resolution. They deserve better protection. That responsibility lies in our hands.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Mr. Hetesy (Hungary): Hungary is deeply committed to the protection of civilians and welcomes the Lithuanian presidency's initiative on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. We also thank today's speakers for their informative briefings.

While we fully support the statement recently delivered by the observer of the European Union, Hungary would like to add the following comments in its national capacity.

For people in conflict situations, access to quality and timely information can be a matter of life and death. Furthermore, the unhindered work of journalists has a mitigating effect on a conflict and on the worst violations. Conversely, restrictions or attacks on independent media, together with biased propaganda, easily contribute to escalation. Yet in the past decade, attacks against journalists reporting from conflict zones have steadily increased in both number and severity. As others have already mentioned, there is also have the gender factor. According to a 2014 survey, nearly half of women journalists said they had experienced sexual harassment. Many of those crimes remain unreported for fear of reprisals and stigmatization. When incidents do receive public attention, blaming the victim is a frequent phenomenon.

Mushrooming conflicts, asymmetrical warfare and also a hunger for negative sensations in reporting will continuously send media workers into harm's way. Therefore, we must protect those on whom our access to information partially depends. We commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 2222 (2015) today. Hungary is a proud co-sponsor of the resolution.

As many have also pointed out, outside these walls General Assembly resolution 68/163, on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, also recommends practical measures to promote a safe and enabling environment for media workers. Furthermore, the resolution clearly identifies the threat posed by non-State actors, including terrorist groups and criminal organizations.

As your concept note (S/2015/307, annex) points out, Madam President, the vast majority of these crimes still go unpunished. Since 2014, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists has served to ensure that this issue receives constant attention. While accountability for crimes can help prevent future attacks, we must also point out that ending impunity is first and foremost a State responsibility.

However, the increased number of attacks on journalists is a symptom of a much broader problem related to the diminishing respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law obligations in conflict situations. Therefore, besides treating the symptom we will also have to focus on the root causes. Based on that understanding, violence against journalists can be addressed only through the cooperation of States, United Nations agencies and the relevant stakeholders.

The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is the first holistic effort to address these issues. We commend UNESCO as the overall coordinator of the implementation of the Plan of Action. We also urge the Security Council to build on the resolution adopted today in order to further contribute to these endeavours in conflict situations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Mr. António (*spoke in French*): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Madam President, on the very topical choice for our debate here today, as well as for the outstanding concept note (S/2015/307, annex) prepared by your delegation to better frame the parameters for our discussions. I should also like to convey my gratitude to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, as well as the Director-General of Reporters Without Borders for their very exhaustive briefings.

The testimony of Ms. Mariane Pearl says a great deal about the serious and alarming risks that journalists expose themselves to on the ground in conflict areas. The continuing deterioration of conditions for carrying out this profession in many hotspots throughout the world, including Africa, quite rightly underlines the scale of the challenges to be met at international and regional levels to ensure that journalists in practice enjoy the necessary protection.

Despite the setting up of a normative framework to that end, including the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, as well as Security Council resolution 1738 (2006), which clearly guarantee that journalists cover armed conflict situations as civilians, the dangers facing journalists continue to increase.

It quickly becomes apparent that the problem does not stem from a lack of international norms, but rather from the absence of their thorough implementation — including their application in areas controlled by non-State actors. Defying fundamental rights, these entities often use violence to silence voices of dissent. In Africa, terrorist groups such Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other negative forces are increasingly implicated in abuses against journalists who attempt to investigate and expose their criminal activities.

The plight of journalists working in conflict areas in Africa remains a major concern for the African Union. This critical situaton reflects not just a serious violation of the freedom of expression, but also an affront to shared democratic values and human rights. In partnership with civil society and representatives of the media, the African Union Commission is fully committed to fighting against restrictions imposed on journalists in conflict zones. This commitment includes raising the awareness of State and non-State actors of the need to ensure the safety of journalists. To that end, in September 2010, the African Union held a workshop on the security and protection of African journalists, which, in addition to Member States, brought together representatives of the Federation of African Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists and the African International Trade Union Confederation.

The action of the African Union in this area was also bolstered by the establishment of follow-up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of member States' commitments falling within the the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of expression and access to information in Africa. Moreover, the issue of attacks carried out against journalists in periods of conflict was given special attention by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which, in 2002, adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa. The Declaration recalls the centrality of access to information as well as its importance in promoting and protecting fundamental human rights — while encouraging democratic values, accountability and sustainable development. While underscoring respect for the non-combatant status of journalists, it also highlights the need for States to take the necessary measures to prevent such violence, prosecute the offenders and bring them to justice — ensuring that victims have access to effective remedy.

Furthermore, during its fourty-ninth ordinary session, held from 28 April to 12 May 2011, in Banjul, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a resolution devoted entirely to the security of journalists and media practitioners in Africa. That resolution, which notes the deterioration of the situation of journalists and media professionals in certain regions of the continent, calls on all parties involved in armed conflict to respect the independence and freedom of journalists in the exercise of their profession and to ensure their security in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Before I conclude, Madam President, allow me to stress the need to step up efforts to achieve our goal, which is to silence weapons. By their very nature and regardless of our efforts, armed conflicts will continue to lead to situations of abuse and violation of human rights.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Archbishop Bernardito Cleopas Auza, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza: I would like to thank Lithuania for organizing this important debate and to express my delegation's appreciation for Lithuania's presidency this month.

At the outset, the Holy See offers prayers for the journalists who have lost their lives in the faithful exercise of their profession, and expresses solidarity and sympathies to their families. Let us acknowledge their tremendous contribution to our world.

Society has a right to objective information, and it is through the observance of this exigency that the media are at the service of the common good. The role of journalists in providing information is among the principal instruments of democratic participation. In promoting access to and providing information, dedicated journalists in conflict settings provide a lifeline to those trapped behind combat lines or caught up in the crossfire. They also offer policymakers — including the Security Council — the information necessary to make informed and responsible decisions on how to end conflicts and assist those affected by them.

My delegation deplores the fact that hundreds of journalists were killed over the past decade. While danger is sadly a constant feature of life in conflict situations, there is no excuse for parties in conflict not to respect and protect journalists. Parties in conflict are obviously not always reliable sources of objective information. The exigencies of, and the need to justify, military operations often trump the right to objectivity in information. Here lies the fundamental importance of journalists dedicated to truth and to the promotion of the common good. Here lies, as well, the grave danger that a party or parties in conflict would specifically target journalists faithful to their duty of objective reporting.

Today's debate has highlighted a number of tools already at the disposal of the international community. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols grant protection for journalists and civilians in conflict settings. However, military protection policies and judicial accountability mechanisms remain insufficient, and in many places are non-existent. It is in fact unacceptable that only fewer than than 5 per cent of the cases of murders of journalists end in the prosecution of the perpetrators.

The protection of journalists in conflict situation gains more urgency in the context of the new challenges that today's conflict situations present. My delegation believes it is relevant to re-examine the current rights and protections of journalists in conflict situations, to see if they are still adequate, or whether more specific protection measures for journalists are needed — in as much that they are a special category of civilians — particularly in the context of conflicts perpetrated by non-State actors.

While it is the duty of Governments to ensure that the measures already in place to protect journalists are fully applied, more often than not, in conflict situations State institutions break down or are impeded. Indeed, conflicts are frequently symptoms of deeper problems, including the weakness of State institutions themselves. To that end, the international community can play an important role in providing technical and financial assistance for needy countries to improve policies both to protect journalists and to address violations of already existing rules for their rights and protection.

Media organizations also have responsibilities in ensuring the safety of their journalists. Journalists themselves should exercise tact, especially in situations in which the duty to objective reporting seems to collide with respect for the cultural values and religious beliefs of peoples involved in the conflict. While lack of objective information is a disservice to the truth, could put lives at risk and misguide policymakers and the public in general, lack of respect for cultural values and religious beliefs could only exacerbate the conflict.

My delegation salutes those who put their lives on the line so that the cries of those trapped in conflict situations can be heard and the voices of those longing for peace can find an echo. May the appreciation we have for journalists' valuable work translate itself into greater efforts to protect them better in armed conflicts. Above all, let us all work together to banish wars and conflicts, so that no one may ever have to risk life and limb.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative from Finland.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the obseraver of the European Union.

We thank the briefers for their presentations. We would also like to thank Lithuania for convening this high-level open debate on the protection of journalists in armed conflicts — a theme that needs our full attention.

We welcome the important resolution the Council adopted today (resolution 2222 (2015)), which Finland also co-sponsored.

In recent years and months there have been too many reports of journalists being killed or kidnapped in conflict areas. Journalists, bloggers and others who defend human rights and report on violations of human rights or international humanitarian law in fragile or conflict situations often put their lives at great risk. They are being persecuted because of their work in shedding light on injustices. They are to be respected and protected, not targeted. All attacks against journalists must be investigated, and perpetrators must be brought to justice. Impunity is not an option. Finland strongly supports the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, initiated and coordinated by UNESCO.

Women and girls are often the most vulnerable in conflict situations. Furthermore, female journalists face a greater risk of discrimination and violence than their male colleagues. All Governments must guarantee a safe environment for all media professionals so they can perform their work independently and freely. We also need to pay special attention to promoting a safe environment for female journalists.

We know that stable and peaceful societies are based on respect for human rights and the principles of democracy, transparency and the rule of law. A truly democratic society requires freedom of expression and assembly, free media and a safe environment for journalists. Finland is proud at having ranked number one for five years in succession in the World Press Freedom Index, which measures the performance of countries according to a range of criteria, including media pluralism and independence and respect for the safety and freedom of journalists.

Media professionals, journalists and human rights defenders can play an important role in preventing conflicts by providing and disseminating valuable early warning information. They report on the inequality, discrimination and flagrant human rights violations that often underlie conflicts, thus providing the international community with the pieces of the puzzle that enable us to form a comprehensive picture and act accordingly.

In terms of early warning, an excellent example is the Council of Europe's platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists, which is an open web page where partner organizations can post alerts. These alerts are concrete cases, and they contain information on the country and the type and source of threat. The platform has been open since the beginning of April, and at the moment there are 49 active alerts concerning 15 States. The idea of the platform is to offer a transparent early warning mechanism and provide information for the use of Council of Europe bodies.

Finland strongly believes that all human rights also apply online. Respect for human rights and international law is also crucial to all activities in cyberspace. Finland supports openness and transparency online and equal access to the Internet. For journalists these are an imperative. The Internet provides an important means for enhancing the participation of civil society, including human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations.

In May 2016, Finland will be proud to host the main event of the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day, with a focus on the freedom of information and tackling questions related, inter alia, to freedom online and the issue of impunity. The event also coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I believe that we all share great respect for all those journalists who risk their lives in order to report on the injustices of our world. We owe it to them to provide the protection they need to carry out their work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Lithuanian presidency for convening today's important meeting. It is my pleasure to deliver a statement today on behalf of my country, the Syrian Arab Republic.

As I am addressing the Security Council today, the Qatari satellite television channel Al-Jazeera is broadcasting an interview with a terrorist called Abu Muhammad Al-Julani, who is the leader of the terrorist so-called Al-Nusra Front, which is an organization on the Security Council's Al-Qaida sanctions list. That interview is designed to incite terrorism and threaten the Government and the people of Syria.

As the Council well knows, such an interview is a flagrant violation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on terrorism, in particular resolution

1624 (2005), which prohibits incitement to terrorism. It is clear that the Qatari regime is trying, through such an interview with the commander of a terrorist organization on a Security Council sanctions list, to whitewash the image of the Al-Nusra Front, just as the mafia launders dirty money, by portraying it as the moderate opposition. It needs to be known that, in his interview on the Qatari satellite television channel, this terrorist, Al-Julani, directed various threats against a number of States Members of the United Nations.

The Syrian Government has always dealt with the media in all openness. From the very first weeks of what is called a crisis, it enacted a new law on media in a reform effort that aims at enhancing the freedom and transparency of the work of the media. In cooperation with the former Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Syrian Government committed to implementing his six-point peace plan, including point 5, relating to the access and work of journalists. This Syrian commitment was reflected in the delivery of authorizations to enter and work in the country to hundreds of Arab and non-Arab foreign journalists. That was confirmed at the time by Mr. Annan, when his Office said that it had verified journalists' access to Syria and that the requests he received then were only requests to extend the periods of visits.

The Syrian Government still welcomes and receives journalists who wish to enter Syria, but it requires that they do so in a legal manner and through the official border crossing points in order to be able to work freely. The Syrian Government attaches great importance to the safety and security of journalists and asks them not to enter Syria illegally, which would put them in harm's way. It also requests that journalists avoid the places where terrorists groups, especially Daesh and the Al-Nusra Front, are present. It is unfortunate that some foreign journalists have become victims of terrorism, having faced aggression, abductions, detentions and murder, just like their Syrian counterparts.

The Syrian Government has made great efforts, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to free the abducted journalists and evacuate the wounded and the remains from the areas where armed terrorist groups are found and repatriate them. Nevertheless, some journalists unfortunately continue to illegally infiltrate Syrian territory through our borders with neighbouring countries, sometimes with the help of armed groups or with the assistance of the authorities of neighbouring States, which leads some of them to face grave danger. Others are arrested and then released and allowed to leave Syria.

On behalf of my Government, I have addressed official letters to the Secretary-General and successive Presidents of the Security Council reaffirming that we seek to guarantee the safety and security of journalists wishing to work in Syria. We ask them to abide by official regulations, to stay out of danger and not to put themselves in situations where the Syrian authorities would be unable to guarantee their safety.

For the fifth consecutive year, an unprecedented media campaign continues to incite terrorism and violence, sow divisions and concoct lies concerning the events taking place in my country, in flagrant violation of resolution 1624 (2005) and media ethics, or what is left of such ethics if they even exist. Numerous global television channels and Internet websites openly promote terrorism, attract and recruit foreign terrorist fighters and bring them to Syria from all parts of the globe, in deliberate violation of relevant Security Council resolutions and other international counter-terrorism instruments.

While this is happening, a suspicious paralysis has beset the Security Council and its subcommittees, coinciding with attempts to silence the Syrian media by targeting their institutions through terrorist acts of sabotage, and by abducting and assassinating its personnel. Those terrorist attacks have caused the deaths of 33 journalists and media personnel working with Syrian media institutions, and scores of others have been attacked, injured, kidnapped and held in detention by armed terrorist groups that certain powerful members of the Security Council pride themselves on training, openly, in Turkey, Jordan and other countries.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I would like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the presidency of Lithuania for convening this open debate on the protection of journalists.

This subject is particularly important to Indonesia for two reasons. The first is that we understand the significance of the free flow of information to our efforts to institutionalize transparency and accountability. Journalists are often a critical part of that process.

The second is that, in conflict situations, transparency is often the first victim. As a result, journalism and journalists journey into peril. Examples of such peril, and the tragedy that consequently befalls journalists, are not hard to find in recent or contemporary conflicts.

Indonesia is deeply concerned about incidents of violence and deliberate attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel. The irony is that, although we now live in a world where the free flow of information and freedom of expression are deemed to be basic and essential elements of democratic societies, independent journalism is often the target of various actors who wish to keep the inconvenient truth hidden.

Amid this distressing but increasing trend, we might continue to ask how international humanitarian law protects journalists and other media professionals. There should be no doubt that international law sets out clear provisions for the protection of journalists in such situations. Journalists in armed conflict should be considered civilians and therefore be afforded the protections to which civilians are entitled. Such assaults and the ensuing tragedies are therefore in violation of international humanitarian law. As we all know, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols explicitly provide protections for media personnel. In that regard, it is important to underscore that in both international and non-international armed conflicts, an intentional attack on a civilian may amount to a war crime under the Rome Statute.

Another important reference that we need to strengthen further in this context is resolution 1738 (2006) on the protection of journalists in armed conflict, which highlights the obligation of all States and parties in armed conflicts to comply fully with international humanitarian law. It also condemns deliberate attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in armed conflicts, and calls upon all parties to put an end to such practices.

The obvious conundrum is that many of today's conflicts are not being fought between States — that is, between signatories to international legal instruments. Instead, these conflicts involve insurgents, terrorists and groups with no recognition of, let alone any respect whatsoever for, international humanitarian law. In effect, they are actors who often delight in the negative publicity their heinous acts bring them. In other words, this debate deals as much with the protection of civilians in armed conflict as it does with the very nature of impunity, as enjoyed by outlaws involved in conflicts. This critical element makes the extremely daunting task of protecting journalists in conflict as important as protecting other civilians, and presents an enormous challenge to the Council in its consideration of this agenda item.

The important role that journalists play in monitoring the observance of international humanitarian law often means that, in conflict situations, they are vulnerable to being targeted by those who wish to protect or maintain their own impunity. My delegation therefore believes that steps taken to prevent impunity can function as the most important deterrent against the perpetration of attacks on journalists. Needless to say, we fully concur that effective investigations of attacks on journalists and the relentless prosecution of perpetrators are, in the end, a potent means of protecting journalists.

We also call on news organizations to work in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including, the United Nations and its peacekeepers, to improve the safety of media personnel during assignments in conflict zones. While underlining the need for media personnel to be prepared to confront the risks inherent in war zones, my delegation believes that it is also important for them to be well informed and up to date on the provisions of international humanitarian law so that they can take advantage of its provision for their protection when covering conflict situations, and can report on and monitor the observance of international humanitarian law.

My delegation is of the view that it would be an advantage in this context if the dissemination of international humanitarian law were to be further extended to all relevant stakeholders in armed conflicts, including by embedding it in the process of mediation between or among parties to conflict and in the training of United Nations peacekeepers and related actors. Undoubtedly, the raising of awareness of international humanitarian law to the public at large in peacetime, in the context of preventive action, is also essential and will further promote respect for the rule of law and inculcate the principles of humanity, which curtail violence and preserve peace as desired by us all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Riecken (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

Let me thank the Lithuanian presidency for convening today's open debate. The protection of journalists is a priority for Austria. We are continuously witnessing high numbers of targeted and often deadly attacks on journalists. Over 600 journalists and media workers have been killed over the past 10 years, and attacks on journalists are occurring in virtually all regions of the world. We are particularly appalled by the unprecedented cruelty of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups.

Since only the beginning of 2015, 30 journalists have been killed, according to the International Press Institute, either because of their reporting or simply because they were journalists. It must be emphasized that the clear majority of attacks against journalists take place in situations that cannot be qualified as traditional or typical armed conflict situations. Journalists reporting, for instance, on organized crime, corruption, protests and popular uprisings easily become targets of assault, arbitrary arrest, harassment or intimidation. Those attacks aim to silent critical voices and greatly impede the right to the freedom of expression.

In recent years, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council have shown increasing international awareness by adopting resolutions condemning attacks against journalists. They have called upon all States to act on their legal obligations to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists, so that they can perform their work independently and without undue interference. Austria will continue to play an active role to raise political awareness of the problem. We also particularly welcome the significant efforts of UNESCO in implementing the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

While it is the responsibility of States to ensure that journalists' right to protection as civilians is respected, all parties to a conflict, including non-State actors, must comply with the rules of international humanitarian law as well as international criminal law, which establish clear obligations for individuals. The Security Council has an important role to play in that regard and must regularly address the issue of the safety of journalists in a substantial manner, including in its country-specific deliberations. The Council should strongly condemn attacks against journalists whenever they occur as they are a direct threat to free and democratic societies. Austria encourages the Secretary-General to include more detailed information on the situation of and threats against journalists in his future reports on the protection of civilians. The Security Council should also make better use of the expertise of United Nations experts, including the relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and UNESCO representatives, and invite these experts for briefings.

Furthermore, it would be crucial for United Nations missions, agencies and offices to be better prepared to become the first points of contact for journalists under threat, especially in conflict situations. Taking into account recent experiences from the situation of non-international conflicts, Austrian authorities have responded to increasing expectations to ensure the protection to our own journalists reporting from conflict zones by introducing an identity card for journalists in accordance with article 79 of the Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions.

Impunity for those responsible for attacks has been recognized as the biggest obstacle for the effective protection of journalists. Nine out of 10 crimes committed against journalists go unpunished. Therefore, States must strengthen accountability for attacks, in particular by vigorously condemning such attacks when they occur, by investigating them promptly and effectively in order to duly sanction those responsible, and by providing compensation to the victims where appropriate. We should therefore also consider how regional justice mechanisms, such as ad hoc tribunals and the International Criminal Court, based on its existing competence, can contribute to ensuring accountability if efforts at the national level do not bring the expected results.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz Blanco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, we are grateful to your country for convening this open debate, which focuses our attention and that of the world on the situation facing journalists in the practice of their profession in times of serious crisis on the international scene.

Multiple reports on this issue persistently show a serious deterioration in the conditions in which journalists work and the dangers they have faced over the past few years. I believe that these conditions signal serious concerns within a much broader context. They reflect the deterioration in international security and serve as indicators of the tenuous humanitarian situation confronting many countries.

For Colombia, the freedoms of thought, opinion and expression, as well as the ability of all parties and opposition movements to freely express themselves without restriction, are not only values recognized and defended legally, but are fundamental, core legal principles of our societies and values of our Governments, which have confronted harsh and violent wars and forces, including those that have sought unsuccessfully to silence and destroy Colombian democracy. Colombia has learned many lessons based on past events that undermined our democracy. Those lessons have served as a route to understanding the fundamental importance of journalism in providing not only visibility for those conflicts that occur globally and locally, but also a way to confront and expose those that threaten the lives of our citizens, institutions and democratic values.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, while our central Government was directly fighting the transnational network of drug trafficking mafias, it was courageous journalists who dared to denounce the criminal activities of those mafias and to publish them on the front page of newspapers like *El Espectador*, a daily that has suffered, without changing its editorial position, the devastating consequences of the assassination of its director, Don Guillermo Cano, and some of its journalists, including the almost total destruction of its facilities by a car bomb. UNESCO has recognized the courage of this exceptional journalist by attaching his name to the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

The Government of Colombia promotes and protects the freedom of the press. As President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, a journalist by profession, has stated on several occasions, journalists in Colombia can be assured that the Colombian State has all the means available to promote and protect, come what may, their freedom and independence and their self-sacrificing work, without exceptions of any kind. That is why I want to highlight some measures that we have developed for specific targeted actions that will have an impact on the promotion of freedom of expression and the security of journalists.

First, we have established a public policy whereby, beginning in 2012, we have integrated all national security agencies, under the coordination of the Ministry of Interior, together with civil society organizations, to strengthen, guarantee and defend the right to the freedom of expression in the practice of journalism. The process has involved more than 20 State agencies, 23 civil society organizations, 8 universities and media outlets.

Our second measure was to establish a national protection unit, to which United States Ambassador Samantha Power referred this morning. The national protection unit has provided protection to more than 137 journalists who were subject to threats, providing them with the necessary means for their protection, including armoured vehicles and escorts for the most serious cases, on behalf of the Colombian Federation of Journalists.

Our third measure was to establish, through the national Attorney General's office, an action plan to strengthen investigations into serious violations of journalists' rights, as well as institutional capacities and the results of judicial inquiries so as to deliver effective justice in such cases. The work enjoys the support of the Foundation for Press Freedom and INTERPOL.

I can therefore state with firm conviction that defending and effectively protecting those who have chosen to work as journalists in Colombia is the task of the Government of President Santos Calderón, in accordance with our Constitution, which in its article 20

> "guarantees to all persons the freedom to express and disseminate their thoughts and opinions, to receive true and impartial information and to establish mass media organizations. The mass media are free and have a social responsibility".

In closing, I should like to quote once again a journalist who was also our Nobel Prize laureate, Gabriel García Márquez, who, in speaking of journalism, said: "It can only be digested and humanized by its brutal confrontation with reality".

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Madam President, allow me at the outset to thank the Lithuanian presidency for holding this open debate, thus giving us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to promoting freedom of opinion and expression as a fundamental right and an essential precondition for democracy, the rule of law, peace and stability.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2222

(2015) on this topic earlier today, which we were glad to co-sponsor.

Free, diverse, objective and independent media are indispensable in any society determined to promote and protect freedom of opinion and expression. Without free journalism, many injustices might go unnoticed by the international community, and much human suffering would fade into oblivion without a single word of protest. Every day journalists are on the front lines, sometimes on the domestic fields of political and social battles, providing us with important information and inside views, but some of them are on real battlefields, reporting from burning crisis areas and risking their lives for information or a video clip that speaks volumes and will make a difference. In areas where few dare to go, journalists serve as our eyes and ears, and often as our conscience. Their need for protection is, unfortunately, very real, and it is well deserved.

Croatia is deeply worried about the continuing attacks on independent journalism in certain countries, as well as by the escalating trend of intimidation, harassment, arrests, torture and prosecution of journalists worldwide. We strongly condemn all actions that suppress freedom of the press, including the brutal murders of journalists by terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, the murderous attacks against media outlets such as the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and the kidnappings of journalists and media workers by militant groups in eastern Ukraine, to cite just a few examples from a long and inglorious list.

In this century alone, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 795 journalists and media workers have been killed. The number of journalists in prison, kidnapped or taken hostage in the same period exceeds 2,200. These are horrifying numbers. It is equally troubling that those responsible for attacking and killing journalists very rarely face justice. Against this disturbing background, we highly value and fully support the continuing efforts of the Human Rights Council and the Security Council to provide journalists with more effective protection and develop a single, strategic and harmonized approach to the issue of the safety of journalists and the impunity of perpetrators of crimes against them.

The General Assembly and Human Rights Council annual consensual resolutions on the safety of journalists are valuable tools in encouraging concrete initiatives aimed at combating impunity for attacks against journalists and media workers. We need to ensure full cooperation between existing protection mechanisms, in particular with Special Rapporteurs and Representatives: those on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution; violence against women; torture; and forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, all of whom play a crucial role in monitoring different aspects of the issue of the safety of journalists.

Croatia supports the 2012 United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. With these calls to action in mind, and in the light of the distinctive threats faced by journalists, we have to continue to recognize the particular vulnerability of journalists in United Nations resolutions on crisis situations. We also wish to underscore the specific risks faced by women journalists, including sexual and gender-based violence, and call for a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists.

The Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have called upon all States to act on their legal obligations to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists, so that they can perform their work independently and without undue interference.

In our joint efforts to end the heinous practices that threaten the safety of journalists worldwide, we need to ensure better cooperation and coordination among various international, regional and local actors, including in establishing effective early-warning mechanisms. We also need to call on all relevant actors to comply with existing standards on the protection of journalists; we need to be more systematic and vigorous in condemning attacks against journalists and violations of their rights; and we need to fight impunity and hold the perpetrators accountable.

To conclude, let me say that as a former journalist who reported from this very building 25 years ago, I can testify to the fact that while the world of media has changed profoundly through new technologies and means of reporting, some things have remained the same since the dawn of this profession. Good journalism can change the world for the better. Journalism must never be silent; by the same token, we must never cease our efforts to provide it with the best protection possible.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add a few comments in my national capacity.

Madam President, let me at the outset thank you for convening this timely debate. It gives us the opportunity to once again reflect on the key issue of the protection of journalists in conflict situations. This question fully deserves our attention, as the number of journalists killed while doing their jobs continues to increase.

Having said that, I would like to highlight the often heroic role of those committed professionals who lost their lives while reporting from zones of conflict. I can still vividly remember the excellent Polish journalist and war correspondent Mr. Waldemar Milewicz, who bravely reported from different parts of the world. He brought into our homes tragic stories of war and death and let us witness the suffering of innocent victims. On 7 May 2004, Waldemar Milewicz was travelling around Baghdad in a clearly marked press vehicle when he was attacked by a group of armed men. Milewicz was hit first and died instantly. Another member of his crew, Mounir Bouamrane, an Algerian-Polish editor and translator, was killed in a second volley of gunfire when he left the vehicle.

There are so many similar tragic stories of the devoted men and women prepared to risk their lives to tell the truth about the horrors of war to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the dangers that journalists face very often transcend the borders of conflict zones. For example, the conflict in Syria has brought suffering not only to the correspondents working on the spot but also to those in neighbouring Lebanon. In 2014, two journalists were kidnapped there on a smuggling route for Syrian rebel forces. Ironically, they were preparing a report on the kidnapping of journalists inside Syria.

Indeed, statistics on the safety of journalists are frightening. In 2015 alone, 25 journalists have been killed. Among them were Ali al-Ansari, killed in January in Iraq, Qais Talal Agha, killed by Daesh in February in Iraq, and Khalid Mohammed al-Washali, killed in January in Yemen. We pay tribute to them and to all those who died while exercising their jobs.

It would be impossible to overestimate the role that journalists play in today's world. Contemporary societies depend on the exchange of the most current news and access to honest, impartial information. We should not forget that press and media coverage benefit everyone and that they are crucial for the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Journalists are the eyes and voice of civil society. Brave, truthful reporting often inspires and encourages people to defend freedom, demand justice and construct democracy.

Let me mention just one example, from Tunisia. It has already been demonstrated that the safety and rights of journalists are often not ensured. In violation of international obligations, standards and declarations, journalists are kidnapped, imprisoned or forced into exile. They face threats, harassment, fines and assaults. As States Members of the United Nations, we have an obligation to take active steps to prevent and respond to violence and intimidation against journalists and other media actors, in order to enable them to work in safety and security.

We must continuously promote respect for international standards, as set forth in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as in Security Council resolutions. There is an urgent need to address the root causes of violence against journalists and their sources. Preventive mechanisms must be further developed. The sharing of best practices on the safety of journalists, as well as training and awareness-raising for security services and journalists themselves, can contribute to preventing future violations. In that light, we welcome today's adoption of resolution 2222 (2015), which was introduced at the initiative of Lithuania. Poland proudly co-sponsored that important document.

While working to increase the safety of journalists in conflict, we should not forget to focus on accountability. As stated in the concept note (S/2015/307, annex) for today's debate, accountability for the perpetrators of attacks against journalists is virtually nonexistent. Accountability is especially important for local media workers, who constitute the largest percentage of journalist victims. To address that issue, Poland has been supporting the European Endowment for Democracy since its establishment in 2013. The Endowment works on the media environment and helps to keep it safe. In that regard, we are pleased that the Endowment's participants include representatives of countries from the Middle East such as Lebanon and Jordan and from Eastern Europe, including Armenia and Ukraine.

As today's debate proves, we should not hesitate to ask questions on the most serious threats to the safety of journalists, such as the existence of common threat patterns or measures to enhance respect for international obligations. We will do our utmost to find the answers to those questions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Mrs. Boura (Greece): I would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for taking the initiative to organize this timely and important debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. I welcome the remarks made by the Deputy Secretary-General and the Director-General of Reporters Without Borders.

Greece aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add a few words on this issue of major significance in my national capacity.

As the Secretary-General confirmed in his report on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (A/69/268), there has been an upward trend in the number of journalists killed in recent years and increased targeting of journalists and media workers. More than half of the 61 journalists killed in 2014 were covering war regions; 17 of them were killed in Syria. The numbers taken hostage, tortured or subjected to forced disappearance draw an even more dismal and alarming picture. Local journalists are the majority of victims, while women journalists are regularly targeted. Resolution 2222 (2015), adopted today, which Greece co-sponsored, highlights the importance of the issue and of the new challenges that should be addressed. It is a positive development that we strongly welcome.

Over the past few years, the United Nations has actively engaged the international community in creating a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, launched by UNESCO, is a comprehensive approach for an inter-agency mechanism to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media professionals in both conflict and non-conflict situations.

In 2013, Greece, together with a cross-regional group of States, introduced resolution 68/163 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, proclaiming 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. That resolution, whose text was adopted for a second consecutive year in 2014 as resolution 69/185, condemns all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers.

However, improved awareness and normative progress are not enough to guarantee the safety of journalists. The safety of journalists who work in conflict areas is by no means assured and their working conditions are increasingly deteriorating. The heinous crimes committed since August 2014 by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) constitute a blatant example. Only a month ago, seven journalists and media workers were found brutally assassinated near Derna, the Libyan city controlled by ISIS. Such barbaric crimes should strengthen the resolve of the international community to take all necessary measures to bring the perpetrators to justice. As the Secretary-General stressed in his report, impunity remains the biggest obstacle to effectively ensuring the safety of journalists.

To achieve those goals, it will be necessary to engage all stakeholders. Only through a comprehensive approach involving United Nations agencies, peacekeeping missions, civil society and States will we be able to begin to reverse the vicious circle of impunity and to protect journalists working in war-torn regions.

Training is vital to achieving results in promoting the safety of journalists in conflict areas. Journalists and other media workers reporting from war zones should be physically fit, emotionally prepared, appropriately equipped and adequately insured. Such prerequisites are rarely fulfilled, especially in the case of freelance journalists or independent media workers. Media agencies should be encouraged to provide their employees with adequate training before sending them into conflict regions. Their goal should be to train journalists to face combat risks and battlefield hazards, as well as to provide them with emergency first-aid skills.

In that regard, States could lend their expertise through specialized agencies, military personnel and infrastructure. Greece is prepared to engage in that direction by offering its existing infrastructure to provide relevant training. The Hellenic Multinational Peace Support Operations Training Centre, located in the region of Macedonia, in northern Greece, is already scheduling the launch of relevant training courses. Having developed expertise in providing essential practical knowledge to military personnel, police and civilians, the Hellenic Multinational Peace Support Operations Training Centre is ready to offer training for conflict situations to journalists and media workers.

We must redouble our efforts to enhance the safety of journalists and to put an end to impunity. It is often said that truth is the first casualty of war. United Nations Member States must remain strongly committed to ensuring better protection for the courageous journalists who strive to keep truth alive.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Roet (Israel): I would like to congratulate Lithuania on its successful presidency of the Council this month. We would also like to thank Mr. Linkevičius, Lithuania's Minister for Foreign Affairs, for personally presiding over today's meeting.

I would like to take a moment to recognize that we had Mariane Pearl in the Security Council with us today. The brutal murder of Mariane's husband Daniel in Pakistan in 2002 shocked the world, but her tireless work ensures that his legacy lives on, and he is remembered very fondly in Israel. May his memory be blessed.

This discussion could not come at a more critical time for journalists in conflict situations. Those brave men and women serve as the eyes, ears and mouth of the entire world in the very places where many would prefer us to be blind, deaf and mute. Justice Louis Brandeis famously said that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Today, unfortunately, there are many places that are under a total solar eclipse. Without the work of courageous reporters, repressive regimes go unchecked, atrocities go unrecorded and the public remains unaware of the reality on the ground. Those who work in places of conflict and strife ensure the free flow of information from distant battlefields around the globe to our iPads in the comfort of our homes.

There are places in the world where a camera is considered a deadly weapon, a tweet is an act of treason and a microphone is grounds for arrest. Extremist groups target journalists not only to silence them but to declare war on the most fundamental values of the free world — freedom of opinion and expression, freedom to speak our minds and freedom to receive and impart information. They seek to force their barbaric ideology on us by dictating at the point of a gun what we can and cannot say. We should make no mistake — such groups recognize no borders, and their violence and intimidation are not restricted to any particular region of the world. The shots at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris were meant to silence the community of journalists worldwide. However, as hundreds of thousands of the citizens of France proclaimed in the streets, we will not allow the enemies of a free press to silence our freedoms.

In these times of instability, journalists are compelled to report from nations ruled by fear and repression and from lawless lands ruled by warlords. Those whose duty it is to report on the horrific events in such areas are at unprecedented risk of being abducted, tortured or brutally murdered. The most dangerous place in the world for journalists is the Middle East. From Saudi Arabia to Iraq, and from Gaza to Iran, freedom of the press is under siege. Hope for new freedoms has shriveled under the harsh reality of Middle Eastern autocrats and theocrats,who are determined to use any means at their disposal to silence those who would question their legitimacy.

Ten months ago in Iran, a *Washington Post* reporter, Jason Rezaian, was arrested along with his wife. He has been detained without bail, denied access to an attorney and accused of espionage and propaganda against the establishment. Just yesterday, his shadowy trial opened. Not surprisingly, the hearing to decide his fate will be conducted behind closed doors. In other parts of the Middle East, terrorists have seized control and journalists face an even more barbaric fate. Those fanatical zealots mock the very idea of human rights and prefer rule by the sword to rule by law. Their idea of due process is a masked man beheading a helpless kneeling human and posting the execution on YouTube.

The iron-fisted rule that Hamas exercises over the Gaza Strip provides a powerful example of what happens when the press is not free to report what it sees and hears. Israeli families spent last summer racing to bomb shelters, knowing they had only seconds to take cover from Hamas rockets. Thousands of those rockets were fired in broad daylight from hospitals, schools and children's playgrounds. Yet those who turned on their televisions or opened their newspapers did not see reports of the obvious war crimes committed by Hamas. When we ask why so few pictures of those rockets and the Hamas terrorists who launched them ever saw the light of day, the answer comes from the stories of the journalists themselves. The Italian journalist Gabriele Barbati did not dare to report that Hamas-launched rockets killed Palestinian children in a refugee camp until he was, in his own words, out of Gaza and far from Hamas's retaliation. An Indian film crew videotaped a Hamas missile launch just metres from their hotel room, but waited until they were beyond Hamas's reach to air the damning footage. Under such conditions, missiles launches go unseen, the use of human shields goes unreported and falsehoods are accepted as truths.

While Hamas routinely harasses and intimidates journalists, the Palestinian Authority is no better. According to a United States State Department human-rights report, Palestinian Authority security forces harass, detain and prosecute journalists for trying to do their jobs. Furthermore, the Authority abuses the idea of a free press by using State-controlled media outlets to broadcast hateful rhetoric and dangerous incitements.

There is only one exception to the rule in the Middle East. According to Freedom House, an organization that monitors the suppression of freedom around the world, Israel is the only country in the region with a free press. We in Israel understand that a free press is the cornerstone of democracy. Those of us fortunate enough to live in an open society know that with a free press comes bad press, and in Israel we know it all too well. The press is free to challenge the strategic assessment of the head of our army, to debate the reasoning of our Chief Justice and to give political advice to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Israel is a model for how a democratic nation, even while facing immense challenges, can maintain a free and thriving press.

Threats to journalists and a free press are threats to our way of life. When a journalist cannot report the truth and the public is left in the dark, tyranny, dictatorship and the abuse of human rights will follow. It is the responsibility of the international community to work together to protect journalists across the globe. The United Nations was founded on the basis of allowing free and open debate in order to ensure a peaceful world. Only a determined commitment on the part of the Security Council to safeguarding a free press can ensure the realization of the promise of that vision for ourselves and for future generations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan): I thank the presidency of Lithuania for drawing renewed attention to the horrific acts that have been committed against journalists and for calling for more resolute action to defend them.

Targeting journalists represents a direct attack on freedom of expression and on democracy. Such attacks have a far-reaching impact, since they prevent us from receiving first-hand information about political developments, the extent of conflicts, human rights violations and crimes against humanity. That reduces the ability of the United Nations and regional organizations to act promptly and appropriately.

In our joint actions, we have to take into consideration the now radically changed character of war, with its multiple perpetrators — the State, opposition parties, radical religious extremists and criminals. Today, journalists are deliberate targets of public kidnappings and killings for ransom and the release of detained terrorists. Yet countless more unseen and unheard local journalists are silenced through imprisonment and intimidation by their own countries, with sexual violence inflicted on women journalists. So far, regrettably, none of the perpetrators of such acts have been brought to justice, and impunity is increasing.

My delegation would like to propose that UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — through its Representative on Freedom of the Media — the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations and its country teams, together with large media and aid agencies, begin by ensuring that Governments and non-State actors enforce the relevant existing instruments, which include the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statutes, as well as the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, resolution 1738 (2006) and UNESCO's Berlin and Medellín Declarations. It is imperative that we improve training related to working in hostile environments, the rules of war, first aid, improved registration and coordination and insurance coverage, along with the provision of protective gear and better use of digital security devices for journalists.

The United Nations system must therefore work with its partners in the non-governmental media organizations, such as the International Federation of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, the International Press Institute, the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, and others, to provide better protection and safeguards. That would include enhanced ratification of the Additional Protocols, specific classifications of attacks on media personnel as war crimes under international criminal law and, finally, better mitigation, advocacy and education. The Security Council needs to devote further regular attention to such attacks and call upon the Secretary-General and Member States to provide increased robust action.

The Government of Kazakhstan devotes great attention towards implementing norms and standards in its national media legislation, promoting public participation in enacting new laws that minimize administrative barriers in media reporting. It also provides financial and legislative support towards developing independent media. Recently, on 26 and 27 May, Astana hosted, together with the United Nations Department of Public Information, a media seminar on peace in the Middle East. It is one of a series of events and programmes supporting journalists and media representatives in areas of armed conflict. Kazakhstan is considering cooperation with Middle East countries to strengthen peace and stability within the larger international agenda in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Another significant contribution of Kazakhstan is the international Eurasian Media Forum. It is held annually in Astana and serves as a platform to discuss and exchange views on improving the use of best practices in the protection of journalists through United Nations peacekeeping missions, operations of other international and subregional organizations and the involvement of national Governments in peace processes.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's readiness to work further with the international community in ensuring the greater protection of journalists as conflicts become more complex, protracted and hostile.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Zaayman (South Africa): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on convening this important and timely debate. We also extend our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson; the Director-General of Reporters Without Borders, Mr. Christophe Deloire; and Ms. Mariane Pearl, for their insightful briefings.

This debate is particularly significant considering the increasing risks and threats to both journalists and media workers. In 2014 alone, reports indicate that 61 journalists were killed and 221 were imprisoned. Those are concerning trends, considering the obligations of all parties to an armed conflict to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, as provided in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols of 1977 and other international instruments.

South Africa calls on all parties to an armed conflict to restrain from killing civilians, including journalists, in conflict situations and to ensure full respect and protection. We therefore would like to commend the presidency's initiative, as well as various efforts of the Secretary-General, to raise particular attention to the plight of journalists through underlining the importance of putting in place mechanisms that will further ensure their safety during periods of armed conflict.

My delegation would like to reiterate its view that the protection of civilians, including journalists, from the scourge of armed conflict is at the core of the maintenance of international peace and security. South Africa is fully committed to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and continues to support a normative and legal framework for enhancing such protection.

My delegation is also mindful that attacks against journalists and the growing number of casualties among journalists could deter them from accepting assignments and exercising their right to seek and disseminate information, to the detriment of citizens to be informed of various conflict situations around the world. The dissemination of information is also critical to the work of important decision-making bodies, such as the Security Council, that are tasked with the primary responsibility of the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as the wider international community.

It is important to note that the Security Council has called for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and specifically addressed the protection of journalists. In resolution 1738 (2006), all attacks against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in armed conflicts are condemned, and the resolution calls upon all parties to put an end to such practices. In that regard, we fully support the idea of reinforcing accountability measures, such as the strengthening of national judicial institutions, as well as ensuring that the Rome Statute addresses the challenges of today.

As much as this issue has drawn international attention, more remains to be done by the judicial systems within States to combat the culture of impunity and holding perpetrators of attacks against journalists accountable for their actions. In South Africa, freedom of expression is very important because South Africans fought tirelessly and relentlessly to obtain such freedoms. With the advent of democracy in South Africa, we were able to develop a remarkable constitution that enshrines the freedom of the media and freedom of expression. The rights of journalists are fully protected by the law and that is displayed by the vibrancy of the media and the many media outlets that disseminate information to the general public on a daily basis without fear or favour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): We thank the Lithuanian presidency for organizing this useful and timely debate and Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his comprehensive and thoughtful briefing.

We hope that today's debate will help the Council to focus its attention on protecting journalists in situations of armed conflict, as part of the broader debate on the protection of civilians. Independent journalism is vital for a free society, to hold the powerful to account, and for citizens to be informed and actively engaged. As a former journalist, myself, I know the risks journalists take to unveil and uphold the truth.

Freedom of the media is widely regarded as an enabling right, because it helps to secure a wide range of other universal human rights. It is the unhindered functioning of the media that promotes transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs and, of course, in governance. The information age in which we live has made the role and contribution of journalists even more crucial, more so in situations of armed conflict. The media not only bears witness to facts on the ground and provides authentic information; it also shapes opinion and assists in presenting moral and political choices in conflict situations.

There is an obvious relationship between the crucial role journalists play on the front lines and the growing threats to their safety and security. Violence against journalists and their deliberate targeting should be unacceptable. The culture of impunity that has come to endanger their work and jeopardize their lives in those situations should be brought to an end. My country, Pakistan, unequivocally condemns all attacks and violence against journalists in the performance of their professional duties. We share the international outrage on the recent beheading and summary execution of journalists by terrorist organizations. That barbarism must come to an end and the safety of media professionals should be fully assured.

Resolution 1738 (2006) adopted an action-oriented approach to the safety of journalists in armed conflicts. It sent a strong signal to parties in armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international law. Apart from condemning attacks against journalists, it also called for ending impunity in that context. General Assembly resolution 68/163 outlines a comprehensive framework for the protection of journalists that envisages legislative, awareness-raising and other important measures. The Human Rights Council has also taken a lead role in strengthening the normative agenda in that regard. Such frameworks, norms and enforcement mechanisms should be strengthened.

The most dangerous places for journalists remain conflict zones, especially areas controlled by terrorist groups and non-State actors. Achieving the delicate balance between freedom of movement and reporting and the safety of media workers is crucial. The challenge is not only to strengthen the means to assure the safety of journalists in conflict situations, but also to ensure that they are not exposed to avoidable risks.

Today, as many regions of the world descend into chaos and conflict, threats to journalists have become ever more complex. Several new trends are now in evidence: the increased use of terror tactics, rising threats to journalists' lives and kidnapping for ransom in conflict zones, the danger posed to female and freelance media workers in particular and the media's resort to private armed escorts for their protection.

The current international legal framework for the protection of journalists is robust. Among other provisions of international law and norms, article 79 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention clearly identifies journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict as civilians, provided, of course, they take no action that prejudices their status as a civilian. Despite those provisions, deliberate violence against journalists is on the rise.

This alarming trend calls for innovative approaches and responses. We would like to offer the following suggestions: greater understanding and awareness and full and effective implementation of existing provisions of international law; and a well-coordinated and comprehensive international awareness-raising campaign that highlights the prevailing provisions in international law and underscores the consequences of their violation.

As impunity remains a disturbing trend, efforts should be intensified to ensure that perpetrators of attacks against journalists are brought to justice. Governments and local authorities must share all available facts and relevant intelligence information for a clearer understanding of the security situation, the environment in conflict zones and tactics of warring groups and non-State actors. For their part, journalists should give due consideration to the briefings and advice of official authorities. They should also respect local laws, regulations and traditions. Practices like embedded journalism need to be carefully reviewed from the perspective of their impact on the safety of journalists. This is also essential to ensuring their impartiality.

Journalists covering conflict situations should be given the requisite training and practical guidelines to cope with the changing nature of conflict and the tactics of terrorist groups. The role of peacekeeping missions in the protection of journalists should be strengthened by providing additional resources, and media professionals may be identified as a special category of persons to be protected.

Finally, we hope our deliberations today will guide future strategies to ensure the protection of journalists in a world that is transforming faster than our ability to manage the full ramifications of that change.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): At the outset, allow me to start by expressing appreciation for the Lithuanian presidency of the Council for organizing this debate and thanking Mr. Eliasson, the Deputy Secretary-General, and other speakers for their statements.

In the context of continuing armed conflict, journalism has earned itself a reputation as one of the most dangerous professions. While civilians run away from armed conflicts, journalists expose themselves to potential hostilities to inform the international community of the status of events, including humanitarian issues and the suffering of civilian populations.

It is obvious from the current world conflicts that, despite all efforts exerted by the United Nations, including the Security Council, media professionals are more and more at risk of being directly targeted, in violation of international humanitarian law. Despite the existing obligations under the Geneva Conventions, their Protocol I and the adoption of resolution 1738 (2006) and the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, challenges to the implementation of those frameworks remain. Egypt strongly condemns all acts of intimidation and violence against journalists in armed conflicts and would like to make the following observations in this regard.

First, in accordance with international law, the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, including journalists, rests with States. That responsibility also falls to non-State actors, such as terrorist groups and criminal organizations. All parties to the conflict have an international obligation under the Geneva Conventions to protect journalists.

Secondly, commendable efforts have been already undertaken by the Security Council, UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, other agencies and regional organizations to preserve the legitimate rights and interests of journalists. We stress the importance of their joint coordination and cooperation in achieving positive synergy and avoiding duplication to overcome challenges and ensure the full protection of journalists in armed conflicts.

Thirdly, priority should be given to compliance with the relevant standards of international humanitarian law and to having States not yet party to existing international legal instruments accede to them. Special attention is also needed to raise international awareness regarding the existing provisions of international humanitarian law while highlighting the consequences of their violation.

Fourthly, particular consideration is needed with regard to the targeting of journalists by terrorist groups, so as to devise measures to avert incidents of kidnapping and hostage taking and to secure the safe release of journalists held hostage.

Fifthly, where mandated and provided with the necessary human, technical and legal capacities, peacekeeping operations and special political missions can positively contribute to the protection of journalists.

Let me conclude by reiterating Egypt's firm belief in the importance of the protection of all civilians in conflict situations, including journalists, establishing accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and putting an end to impunity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important debate. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mariane Pearl and Christophe Deloire for starkly illustrating the dangers that journalists face and the imperative that we do more to protect them.

Risking their lives to shine a light on trouble spots, journalists play an essential role in helping us understand conflict and pre-empting it. Their reports provide early warnings that can compel us to act. History shows the targeting of journalists is often a precursor to widespread crimes against civilians. Often, victims are local reporters targeted for reporting local stories. In recent weeks, we have been saddened by the murders of radio producer Daud Ali Omar in Somalia and correspondent Pow James Raeth in South Sudan.

In Daesh-occupied parts of Syria and Iraq, most local television stations have stopped working, as many of their employees have been detained, abducted or threatened. Worse still, many reporters — local and international — have been executed publicly for exposing Daesh atrocities and laying bare the extent of its inhumanity. For Daesh, targeting journalists is not just about brutalizing those who bear witness to their crimes. It is about manipulating the media in the most obscene way to project to the world their perverse brand of cruelty and religious zealotry. Journalists contribute to our collective efforts to contest Daesh's hateful narrative and to deny oxygen to its cause.

The Syrian Government has also targeted and imprisoned journalists.

Violence against journalists will persist unless perpetrators know that their attacks will have consequences. Yet impunity for crimes against journalists is too commonplace. States must do more to protect civilians and eliminate impunity for crimes against civilians, including journalists. They must systematically investigate, apprehend and try those responsible. They must also recognize the particular needs of female journalists.

Australia fully supports the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. It is a practical tool to help States develop legislation and other mechanisms to allow for freedom of expression and to implement more international humanitarian and human rights law. We encourage all Member States to work together with the United Nations to implement the provisions of the Plan of Action.

There is a role too for the Security Council, as has been rightly recognized in today's debate. The Council should condemn attacks on journalists, and provisions protecting civilians should be included in relevant Council mandates. The United Nations should also ensure that peacekeepers are trained to provide protection, when appropriate. Australia is deeply committed to the protection of journalists and fully supports resolution 1738 (2006). We warmly welcome the Council's adoption today of resolution 2222 (2015). We encourage that the issue of the protection of journalists to be consistently addressed in the Secretary-General's reports on country-specific situations.

Today's journalists are working in dangerous and volatile conditions. Their ability to do their work safely and freely helps us all to better understand our world. We must persist in our efforts to protect journalists, particularly in situations of conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Violence against journalists is unacceptable and should be treated as an attack on society as a whole. The right to the freedom of expression, and by extension freedom of the media, plays a critical role in any democracy. State authorities are therefore obliged to respect, and to ensure respect for, those freedoms as an essential component of effective governance. I should like briefly to highlight four points.

First, the protection of journalists should not be limited to armed conflict. According to Reporters Without Borders, in 2014, one in three journalists was killed outside of zones of armed conflict, and more than 1,800 reporters were threatened or attacked. The security of journalists must also be guaranteed outside of armed conflict. Journalists continue to be systematically targeted for their investigative work. We need to remind ourselves that the right of journalists to carry out their work under safe conditions without fear of being harassed, threatened, attacked, beaten or killed is of paramount importance to safeguard the freedom of the media and of expression.

Secondly, Switzerland is convinced that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is essential to improve the implementation of international norms and standards regarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law. An example of successful cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations, issued earlier this month by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Declaration recognizes that States have a direct responsibility under international human rights law to respect the freedom of expression, including ensuring accountability for any attacks on those exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Thirdly, journalists not only need protection but the perpetrators of violations against journalists must also be held accountable. Switzerland would like to remind everyone that journalists are protected as civilians under international humanitarian law. They may not be attacked and they have to be protected by all parties to an armed conflict, which have an obligation to ensure their safety and security. In situations of armed conflict, journalists play an important role in monitoring and prevention. By uncovering and informing about violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law, they give voice to victims of such abuses. Thus they play an important part in ending impunity for such acts.

Moreover, media freedom is of paramount importance during transition from violent conflict to peace. It is for those reasons that, through its development cooperation programmes, Switzerland has been supporting the establishment of independent media outlets in conflict-affected countries. Through its partner organization, the Fondation Hirondelle, it has contributed to the establishment of credible media outlets that reach out to local communities in crises situations, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

Finally, clear legislative and regulatory measures need to be adopted to enable journalists to do their work without interference or danger to their personal safety and security. Switzerland has contributed to the establishment of regulatory frameworks favourable to the media and has helped journalists develop their capacity to perform their vital role — for example, in the Great Lakes region of Africa and Tunisia. Switzerland is also helping to strengthen media associations that advocate the freedom of the media and the safety of journalists.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing this morning, as well as Mr. Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders, and Ms. Mariane Pearl, for having shared with us their personal experiences. Those statements underscore the gravity of the issue of impunity with respect to acts of violence against journalists. In fact, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1738 (2006), progress has been slow. We therefore commend the unanimous adoption under the presidency of Lithuania of resolution 2222 (2015), which we co-sponsored.

Let me, at the outset, underscore the essential contribution that journalists provide to maintaining and promoting democratic values in our societies, as well as their contribution to the exercise of the right to information and freedom of expression, and also their contribution to identifying responsibilities of States and non-State players in situations of conflict.

The evolution of the nature of conflicts, which involves not only State players but also a multitude of non-State players, as well as terrorist threats, make the task of journalists even more complex and dangerous, not only in terms of the international press but also the local press. As a result, protecting journalists working in high-risk environments poses a major challenge. Now one sees that, despite the heightened attention given to the killing of reporters, little progress has been made to protect them. There are many journalists who have been imprisoned or killed. Their number is not on the decline, and we are seeing no more perpetrators of such crimes being prosecuted.

My delegation joins the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I would therefore limit my statement to three points that relate to the issue of protecting journalists in situations of conflict. These are, first, the role of States; secondly, the importance of prevention; and, thirdly, new actors in the media sphere.

First, the principles enshrined in resolution 1738 (2006) must be clearly reaffirmed. That is what we did this morning. It is to be regretted that State actors continue to be responsible for the bulk of the acts of violence perpetrated against journalists. It is unacceptable that in certain cases journalists are identified with one of the parties to a conflict for having voiced an opinion that is different from that of the official version of events.

Under international law with respect to human rights, States bear direct responsibility for respecting and promoting the freedom of expression. On the one hand, they must take effective measures to prevent attacks against journalists and other individuals exercising their right to this freedom of expression, and, on the other hand, they must take every possible measure to fight the impunity for perpetrators of crimes committed against reporters.

Secondly, Belgium is convinced that we must invest in prevention to fight all forms of violence against reporters, and this in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and professional associations. On 7 May, during World Press Freedom Day, my delegation associated itself with the International Federation of Reporters for the holding of an event that was called "Finding security in unsafe passages". It is reporters themselves and media experts who put forward their strategies for protection and the resources that they need to implement those strategies.

A framework for support for reporters could be created via non-governmental organizations that are actively working in this area. This, in particular, would have to be a matter of developing the preparation for a mission, supporting reporters who are in captivity and ensuring psychological follow-up for reporters who are suffering from post-traumatic effects. In this digital era, we also need to raise the awareness of reporters and other media players with respect to protecting their sources of information.

Thirdly, the media landscape has been changing. Many reporters and bloggers are working independently now and do not have the benefit of any of the protection that traditionally would come from affiliation with major media bodies or press agencies. They are therefore in a more vulnerable situation. The same holds for their colleagues in the local press, who are also more exposed to violence or persecution for the very same reasons. Protecting their rights and their physical integrity becomes ever more urgent, as does that of recognizing their activities.

The media and reporters contribute to the vision of the world of citizens and political decision-makers. Without journalism there is no information, and without information there is no possibility of forming an opinion or, when necessary, of taking the required decisions. In situations of conflict, reporters exercise their responsibilities at a personal risk. It is therefore essential to reaffirm our determination to have them protected and to prosecute those who deliberately put them in danger.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for its initiative in hosting this important debate today. In honour of your presidency this month, allow me also to say in Lithuanian: "Aciu ponia Presidentas".

We welcome the adoption this morning of resolution 2222 (2015), which we co-sponsored.

I would, of course, like to align my intervention with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I will read out a shortened version of my statement; the full version will be available on Twitter.

Freedom of expression is a top priority for my country. It is crucial in achieving the three ambitions of the Kingdom of the Netherlands here at the United Nations: peace, justice and development. Security Council resolution 1738 (2006) condemned attacks against journalists in conflict situations. Nevertheless — and other speakers have also said this today — journalists, including bloggers, are still the target of aggression, harassment, arbitrary detention. even extra-judicial killings. In the Kingdom of the Netherlands we remember in particular the seven Dutch journalists who lost their lives in past decades in various conflict areas, just doing their job.

Threats against journalists directly affect the role of journalists before, during and after conflict. Journalists play a critical role in reporting on conflicts, revealing the horrors of war and prompting investigations of abuse. Journalists help to create an atmosphere of tolerance through the gathering and dissemination of non-partisan information. The role of the media is relevant for promoting human rights, peace and conflict resolution.

Therefore, it is vital that journalists be able to work freely without interference, without fear. Overall, the role of journalists in countries affected by conflict is unique, involving great risks and personal sacrifice. In this context, there is a specific role for United Nations peacekeeping missions in the protection of civilians, including journalists. An example of this is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, in which the Netherlands is a partner with around 500 men and women. Freedom of the press is a critical element in the integrated approach we pursue in Mali, combining diplomacy, defence and development.

The protection of journalists in conflicts is closely connected to the prevention and prosecution of violence. Violent acts against journalists must be prosecuted. Over the past decade around 700 journalists have been killed worldwide for bringing news and information to the public. Imagine — this means more than one journalist killed every week for ten years. Nine out of ten of these killings go unpunished.

We must fight this impunity of violence against journalists. First, impunity perpetuates violence and quite literally kills the story. Secondly, it leads to a climate of self-censorship. Journalists fearing for their own lives or for the lives of their loved ones refrain from covering stories, often the ones that most need to be told. That impunity needs to be addressed. Prosecution is the best prevention.

Where a free press is threatened and investigative and independent journalism is absent, corruption and illegal activity are allowed to flourish. Journalists deserve full protection — not only in words, but also in deeds. In this regard I would like to point out the importance of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services produced last year that covered the mandates for the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/787). The report highlighted the need for further interventions to ensure adequate protection, a protection that is certainly also needed for journalists. It is of course the responsibility of States to maintain a safe environment for the media and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for committing violent acts against journalists.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands looks forward to further cooperating with the United Nations and its Member States to ensure better protection for journalists, flag bearers of freedom of expression. Journalists are crucial for peace, justice and development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania for convening this meeting and participating in it this morning. I congratulate Lithuania on its successful presidency of the Council this month. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his participation and Mr. Christophe Deloire, Director-General of Reporters Without Borders for his statement. I also thank Ms. Mariane Pearl, who enriched the debate this morning with an account of her experience and personal suffering.

On the third of this month, we commemorated World Press Freedom Day. This reminds us that freedom of the press is a basic human right, as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also a day to pay tribute to journalists who lost their lives while abiding by the noble principles of this profession. Protecting freedom of the press, freedom of expression and access to information is not only crucial for the protection and promotion of human rights, it is also a basic element for maintaining peace and security and for preventing and settling conflicts. Freedom to collect and disseminate information is essential for enhancing the rule of law, democracy, social justice, human rights, economic development and social prosperity. Knowing the background of issues is essential in order to deal with and solve them. Providing a space for freedom of opinion is basic in dealing with the roots of conflict.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians, issued in 2013 (S/2013/689), reflects the extent of attacks on journalists. Hundreds have been killed. Journalists also face abductions, harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, rape and murder. It is unfortunate that there is almost no accountability for the perpetrators of such actions. Here, we would like to refer to examples of the suffering of journalists in the Middle East. Regarding Syria, the Secretary-General states in the report, basing himself on the report of the commission of inquiry, that 84 journalists had been killed in Syria since March 2011. Journalists continue to face murder and forced disappearance in Syria at the hands of the barbaric regime and terrorist groups, which have a common aim: to silence the voices that expose crimes against the Syrian people.

I would like to mention the heroic work of journalists, be they Syrians or non-Syrians, in showing us the truth of what is happening in Syria. Here we speak of those who gave their lives for this noble mission. We also refer to media activists and journalists behind bars in the Syrian regime or abducted by terrorist groups.

We take note of the Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians and of the recommendations it contains pertaining to the protection of journalists in conflict situations. Furthermore, we emphasize the need for accountability for crimes perpetrated against journalists and the need to fight impunity. Accordingly, we support the recommendations in the report with regard to impunity and the safety of journalists.

We welcome the Security Council's adoption this morning of resolution 2222 (2015), which addresses these issues and underscores the importance that the Council attaches to the protection of journalists. Nine years ago, the adoption of resolution 1738 (2006) was a milestone that all the members of the Council supported, including Qatar during its presidency in December of 2006. In the context of protecting journalists and the media, the State of Qatar's support of resolution 1738 (2006) has been reflected in several ways, including the establishment of the Doha Centre for Media Freedom in 2007. The Centre has undertaken a key role in reinforcing freedom of the press and of expression over the Internet.

To that end, Qatar has also hosted a number of conferences, including the celebration of UNESCO World Press Freedom Day in 2009, which resulted in the Doha declaration that guarantees freedom of expression and protection of journalists. In 2012, Qatar hosted the International Conference to Protect Journalists in Dangerous Situations, organized by the Qatari National Committee for Human Rights. The final recommendations called for the appointment of a special rapporteur on the protection of journalists.

In conclusion, the obligation of States and parties to conflicts to protect journalists must not be obviated. They must abide by their commitments in accordance with international instruments, and Qatar will continue in its commitment to the provisions of such instruments.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Botswana joins others, Madam President, in congratulating you on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. We extend our support and cooperation in your efforts.

We deeply appreciate Lithuania's initiative to convene this very important debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. With the unprecedented number of conflicts across the globe and the frequent attacks against journalists, which threaten media freedom, today's debate could not be more timely. In addition, as the Secretary-General notes in his synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/700), sustainable development can be achieved only where freedom of press, access to information and freedom of expression prevail. This is largely because these elements provide for multifaceted and multidimensional platforms for informed discussions across a wide range of issues, which in turn contributes to democratic and inclusive governance and sustainable human development.

We are cognizant of, and deeply troubled by, the increasing risks and dangers faced by journalists working in conflict situations. The recent spate of beheadings of journalists by terrorist organizations is all too real a reminder of the brutality that media professionals are often confronted with. It is also deeply disturbing that they are being directly targeted simply for doing their job, which not only keeps us informed but invariably makes for a safer world.

The Security Council's adoption of resolution 1738 (2006) reflected a recognition of the need for a more concerted international effort to ensure the safety of journalists and to fight impunity against the crimes committed against them, some of which constituted crimes against humanity. While it is well understood that the very nature of their work predisposes them to highly dangerous situations, it is the rising number of deliberate acts of violence against them — including kidnapping, arbitrary imprisonment and torture, that are of particular concern, and which are in direct contravention of international humanitarian law. The Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts explicitly provides that journalists are entitled to all the rights and protections granted to civilians in international armed conflict. Resolution 1738 (2006) thus recognized the imperative for States in conflict to bear the primary responsibility to protect their civilians.

However, the implementation of the resolution has been mediocre if not dismal. For example, we continue to see very low levels of accountability for attacks on journalists. Perpetrators of crimes against journalists are escaping justice, and States are obviously failing in their responsibility to protect. It is therefore imperative that the international community step up and build up the required capacity to assist States in shielding their populations from harm. Greater effort should be made towards accountability and the prevention of impunity, which — as we are all well aware — is the most important deterrent.

The willingness on the part of States at a national level in that regard is critical and cannot be over-emphazised. The tough question before us is this: Is this how it can be achieved? How can we as responsible members of the international community make this world a safer place for journalists to do their work? We may not have a definitive answer, or cover everything that could be said in today's interventions, but Botswana remains firm in its conviction that freedom of expression and an independent media are fundamental for sustainable development. Information is power, and it is information that journalists risk their lives to gather. It should urgently be translated into national development policies and interventions for the betterment of humankind.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's support for efforts by the international community aimed at protecting the lives of innocent civilians, including journalists, without whom the world may well be less stable, less secure and much less equipped to transition to the new development agenda that we look forward to in 2015.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): I would like to align myself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union, but I would like to add a few additional remarks.

First of all, let me thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for bringing this important issue back to the Council. As others speakers have done, I also wish to congratulate Lithuania on today's adoption of resolution 2222 (2015).

Denmark's efforts to support media freedom, including the protection of journalists, are an integral part of our long-standing efforts to enhance civil society and human rights. The rights of journalists and the free media need to be protected all over the world. Unfortunately, persecution of journalists is not a phenomenon restricted to only a few countries. Denmark believes that journalists must be protected to be able to carry out their work without fear of retribution, attack or worse.

In too many countries, the State uses media laws to keep media from criticizing those in power. This is deeply worrying, although it is not a new phenomenon. But what is a new and equally deeply worrying trend is the fact that journalists are now being deliberately targeted, not only by oppressive regimes, but also by terror organizations and militia groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Not since the end of the Second World War have we witnessed such a distressingly large number of armed conflicts in and between countries. Sadly, this is also reflected in the number of journalists killed. Last year alone, as was mentioned earlier today, 61 journalists were killed, and this year the reported death toll has already reached 25.

The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, adopted in 2012, was an important step in addressing the individual safety of journalists globally. However, the protection of journalists and the free media is an ongoing effort that cannot achieve success only through such top-down initiatives, which need to be combined with actual action on the ground.

At the Global Media Freedom Conference 2015 held in Copenhagen last month, the Danish Minister for Trade and Development launched two initiatives aimed at strengthening free media in developing countries and in fragile States, both of which include strong components for the protection of journalists — a programme worth approximately $2 million through the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, and an additional $750,000 through International Media Support in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists.

I would like to conclude by echoing what other colleagues have already underlined: Freedom of opinion and expression are indeed fundamental rights of every human being. Today's debate and the adoption of resolution 2222 (2015) mark an important contribution to our common efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the Lithuanian delegation for organizing today's debate. We appreciate the concept note circulated by the presidency (S/2015/307, annex) and thank the briefers for their contributions.

At the outset, my delegation would like to express our strong agreement with Lithuania's assessment in the concept paper that the issue is not so much the lack of rules but the failure to implement existing norms in terms of protecting journalists working in conflict areas from harm. It is pertinent therefore to reiterate that the protection of journalists in all situations is the foremost responsibility of every State, and States should do everything possible in their power to fulfil this obligation, which is a view which my delegation has consistently held.

It is also true that the threat faced by the journalists, like all civilians in armed conflict situations, has undergone a significant change in recent years, especially due to the change in the nature and rising number of the armed conflicts, which often put journalists at specific risks. This calls for concerted efforts by all States and parties to ensure the safety of journalists in conflict situations.

At the national level, India's Constitution and relevant legislation safeguard freedom of expression and the functioning of free media, online as well as offline, in building inclusive and peaceful knowledge societies and democracies. Since 1950, we have adhered to and fully supported the Geneva Conventions. We are committed to the protection of the rights of all its citizens, including journalists, as stipulated in the international instruments to which we are a party.

With regard to the specific questions the concept paper has raised, we highlight the following three.

First, on the issue of accountability as well as on safety while operating in non-State controlled areas, we recall the Security Council's demand in resolution 1738 (2006), as well as the call in relevant General Assembly resolutions, most recently resolution 69/185, that all parties to an armed conflict comply fully with their obligations and for Member States to ensure accountability. The accountability of Member States faces a specific challenge with regard to non-State actors, especially terrorist groups, that act beyond the pale of law with impunity.

The international community has witnessed acts committed by such non-State terrorist groups against journalists in the recent and distant past. However, even non-State terrorist groups cannot act in a vacuum. We believe that the Council, as the primary organ of the United Nations for maintaining international peace and security, needs to act robustly. It should do so using the instruments of law and the information available to it to make Member States act against such non-State actors. The Council should assist those Member States that may require assistance to strengthen their national capacities to take such action.

Secondly, on the issue of best practices for protecting journalists in conflict situations, we believe that journalists should, first of all, function within the relevant domestic laws of the countries they are operating in; secondly, seek access in a legal manner; and thirdly; maintain strict neutrality and impartiality and not become a party to the conflict. By following such precautions, it will become easier for Member States to protect journalists, facilitate their professional work and ensure that journalists become a catalyst for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For their part, national Governments must put in place mechanisms for protecting journalists and their equipment, especially when they have provided information about their whereabouts and coordinates in advance, and resist imposing arbitrary restrictions unless there is a dire need.

Thirdly, in the context of peacekeeping missions, while we concur with the view that, in terms of implementing the mandates, particular focus should also be given to the protection of journalists as a distinct category of civilians to be protected, we would like to reiterate that this responsibility is vested in the Member States hosting such peacekeeping operations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Bonser (Canada): The Government of Canada is deeply concerned by the increasing number of acts of violence committed against journalists and other media professionals in situations of armed conflict. We support the initiative brought forward by Lithuania to bring attention to this issue.

It is increasingly clear that media professionals are being deliberately targeted, in violation of international humanitarian law. Canada would like to focus particular attention on increasing accountability for perpetrators of crimes against journalists in situations of armed conflict and on ensuring the safety and protection of journalists in conflict zones, including areas controlled by terrorist groups.

Before speaking to that point, Canada would like to stress how important it is that the Security Council and all Member States continue to give sustained and comprehensive attention to the harm done to civilian populations writ large. We are very alarmed by the extent of civilian suffering and displacement caused by armed conflicts. This reflects a diminishing respect for international humanitarian law, which is a situation that must absolutely be remedied. We can do more, starting by seizing these opportunities to address serious concern about the protection of civilians, and committing to reducing this growing problem of unnecessary civilian suffering.

(*spoke in French*)

Accurate, impartial media reports conveyed from conflict zones serve a fundamental public interest. Images and news have an impact on how we confront and respond to armed conflicts. Journalists — and increasingly, citizen and social-media-based journalists — who report from conflict zones face many dangers. Most disturbingly, the specific targeting of journalists by armed groups is alarmingly frequent. The past three years have in fact been the deadliest for journalists since the Committee for the Protection of Journalists organization began keeping track more than two decades ago.

Existing international humanitarian law provides the appropriate protections. Pursuant to the provisions of international humanitarian law, media professionals who work in conflict zones are considered civilians and are therefore to be protected so long as they retain their civilian status. The most serious challenge is not a lack of rules to protect journalists, but a failure to implement existing rules and to systematically investigate, prosecute and punish violations of international humanitarian law.

(*spoke in English*)

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has been connected to some of the more horrifying and high profile killings of journalists, namely the abductions and beheadings of American and Japanese freelancers James Foley, Steven Sotloff and Kenji Goto. Most often, though, local journalists and media workers are the targets of threats and attacks, as we have seen across conflict zones including Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and Somalia. As tensions escalate in Burundi, Canada is concerned by reports that media are being forced out of the country.

All Member States need to ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without fear of violence or arbitrary detention. For journalists, as for all civilians, the harm and suffering deliberately inflicted upon them must end, and perpetrators of such acts must be held to account. The international community must not be silent on this issue. We urge fellow Member States to maintain our attention and resolve on the protection of civilians agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Let me thank the Lithuanian presidency for organizing this public debate. The briefings made this morning demonstrate how the protection of journalists in periods of armed conflict is an important issue that deserves to be on the agenda of the Security Council.

Luxembourg fully endorses the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Since the last public debate on this subject (see S/PV.7003), almost two years ago, we have witnessed increasingly horrendous actions. We all remember the brutal images of the decapitations of James Foley, Steven Sotloff and Kenji Goto. Those journalists had no other ambition but to inform the public about the realities of war. They are among the 88 journalists who, since January 2014, have paid with their lives for exercising their profession, most of them in conflict situations in Iraq, Somalia, Libya and Syria. And 2015 began in the most tragic manner with respect to the freedom of the press when two armed men burst into the premises of *Charlie Hebdo* and, in cold blood, executed eight reporters as well as four other individuals. The Security Council most strongly condemned all those attacks, while highlighting the need to prosecute their perpetrators.

Most often, however, these attacks go unnoticed because most victims are local journalists, whose fates are intertwined with those of hundreds of other killed civilians. Hundreds of other journalists are forgotten because they languish in prisons where they are frequently tortured.

The vast majority these crimes go unpunished. While 749 journalists have been assassinated since 1992, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, in almost 90 per cent of cases, impunity has been total.

These numbers are unacceptable. Resolution 1738 (2006) and resolution 2222 (2015), which the Council has just adopted, rightfully highlight the fact that under international humanitarian law, journalists in times of armed conflict must be treated as civilians and must be respected and protected as such. They reiterate the responsibility of States to prosecute anyone who has violated international humanitarian law. The struggle against impunity must, in fact, lie at the very heart of our efforts to protect journalists in periods of armed conflict. Each unpunished crime is encouragement to all those who want to silence the truth. And it is well known that truth is the first victim of war.

In that context, we welcome General Assembly resolution 68/163, adopted on 18 December 2013, which proclaimes 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, and calles upon Member States to undertake specific measures to fight the culture of impunity. Luxembourg co-sponsored the resolution because we are convinced that the fight against impunity is a critical one in terms of preserving freedom of expression. We also welcome the consideration of the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at the third meeting organized by UNESCO, on 3 November 2014, in collaboration with the Council of the Europe, and the debates convened by the Human Rights Council.

It is clear that cooperation among all stakeholders is necessary if we truly want to change things on the ground and guarantee freedom of expression. We encourage enhanced cooperation among Governments, international and regional organizations, the various United Nations entities at Headquarters and in the field, civil society and representatives of the media in order to enhance the protection of journalists in times of conflict.

By way of this public debate and the resolution adopted today, the Council has clearly shown that it is willing to take action to ensure respect for and the protection of journalists in periods of armed conflict — journalists who, through their work, and sometimes at the risk of their lives, help to uphold the values and freedoms on which the United Nations bases its actions. It has, moreover, acknowledged the specific risks faced by women journalists. We hope that, on this basis and on the basis of the forthcoming reports of the Secretary-General, the Security Council will ensure the necessary follow-up with respect to this important issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): I would first like to thank the Lithuania presidency for its initiative to convene this important high-level open debate, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General and the two panellists for their briefings.

Slovenia also aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Journalism is one of the most influential, but also under-respected and dangerous professions in the world today. Events in recent months, like hostage taking and beheadings of journalists by non-State actors, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have shown that, in contemporary conflicts, attacks against journalists are not a side effect, but rather a front-line consideration.

It is important to stress that, under international humanitarian law, journalists in armed conflict are classified as civilians and entitled to the same protection as the civilian population. Their work often puts them at particular risk of intimidation, harassment and violence in situations of armed conflict. States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the protection of journalists on the territory under their jurisdiction, including by investigating any attacks against them. Yet, in most cases, the perpetrators of crimes against journalists, media workers and associated personnel escape justice and no one is held accountable. Such realities are worrisome and must be addressed.

When States are unwilling or unable to ensure justice themselves, victims rely on the possibility of seeking justice outside national forums. We therefore welcome the ongoing efforts to document evidence of atrocities committed by members of ISIS, as well as efforts made by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the possibility of exercising personal jurisdiction over atrocities committed by ISIS. The fight against impunity cannot be won by a single stakeholder. We need greater partnerships and cooperation to achieve the desired end, including by the Security Council — the only body vested with the authority to refer atrocities to the ICC even when a State is not a party to the Rome Statute.

We should do our utmost to close the impunity gap, as lack of accountability only leads to further violence against journalists, creates a culture of fear and conditions conducive to other systemic abnormalities, and hinders post-conflict rebuilding, the rule of law and long-term peace and stability.

We cannot afford to let terrorist- and non-State actor-controlled zones become blackholes of information. We have to acknowledge the courageous choices of journalists, media workers and associated personnel in going to war zones to report on atrocities and the suffering of innocent civilians, even at the risk of their own lives. When addressing the safety of journalists a gender-based approach is necessary in order to address the situation of women journalists, who are at greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence, which is often used as a weapon of war in conflict zones.

Let me reiterate that the Security Council is not alone in dealing with these issues, as various United Nations bodies have adopted resolutions on the safety of journalists. The General Assembly also affirmed the need to end impunity for crimes against journalists, by declaring 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we condemn the violence against journalists and media workers, whether or not they are in conflict situations, since it has serious repercussions on the freedom of expression and on human rights in general. There should be zero tolerance for any form of violence against journalists. Worrisome trends call for the continued attention of the Security Council. The adoption of resolution 2222 (2015) today is an important step in that direction, and it is also for that reason that Slovenia co-sponsored the resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Schieb (Germany): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important debate. Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today on behalf of the European Union.

Since our last discussion of this issue in July 2013 (see S/PV.7003), the number of violent or even deadly attacks on journalists has continued to grow. According to the International Federation of Journalists, 118 journalists and media staff members were deliberately killed and 17 suffered fatal accidents in 2014. We mourn the death of the German war correspondent Anja Niedringhaus, who was brutally murdered in Afghanistan in April 2014. With her death, both Germany and Afghanistan lost a tireless builder of bridges, who was driven by a deep sense of humanism and respect for other cultures.

Independent journalists are our eyes and ears in this world of growing complexity. Our insight into current wars and crises would be severely limited without their courageous contributions. It is therefore our duty to protect journalists in the best possible way. To do so, we first need to understand the challenges they are facing. In the past few years, the media industry has undergone vast changes. More and more citizen reporters and independent bloggers are joining the more traditional media corps. News corporations and agencies today prefer to hire freelance staff. As a result, it is more difficult to provide protection for an increased number of freelance journalists who are often lacking the logistical support of an employer organization.

In many of today's conflicts, non-State armed groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and Al-Shabaab, have become main actors. Journalists are usually in the greatest danger in areas controlled by such non-State armed groups, who flagrantly and deliberately ignore international law. At the same time, these journalists are often the only independent source of information left in an environment marked by anarchy. In other words, journalists are often at their most vulnerable exactly where they are needed most. It is time to redouble our efforts to improve the protection of journalists. Let me point to four areas where more needs to be done.

First, on effective warning, we appeal to all States to actively provide safety for journalists within their territory. That also means that in so much as it is possible, States should warn journalists and media workers in conflict areas of imminent dangers and risks in order to enable them to take the necessary precautions.

Secondly, on accountability, all States have to do their utmost to bring the perpetrators of crimes against journalists to justice. It is simply unacceptable that accountability for the perpetrators is virtually non-existent at the moment. If accountability cannot be achieved on the national level, the International Criminal Court should be charged with the responsibility of trying cases that amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. We encourage the Secretary-General to include regular information on the safety of and attacks against journalists in his reports. We agree with the concept note (S/2015/307, annex) that this could help to combat the culture of impunity for crimes committed against journalists.

Thirdly, on training, journalists should be sent to conflict zones only after having undergone professional security training. News agencies should ensure that their freelance staff is also well-prepared in that respect. Germany is strongly committed to equipping journalists with the proper skills for dealing with conflict situations. The State-funded Deutsche Welle Academy is supporting a wide range of locally based projects on conflict-sensitive journalism, journalists' security and psychological help. The Academy also offers an online course for international journalists to educate them about digital safety and to ensure their protection against online attacks and targeted surveillance.

Fourthly, we strongly encourage the Security Council to continue the discussion on the protection of journalists. We welcome the adoption of today's resolution 2222 (2015), which Germany supports as a co-sponsor. This substantial resolution sends an important message. It also means that we need to redouble our efforts to better implement existing rules.

The horrific attack on the French news magazine *Charlie Hebdo* reminded us of the bitter reality that journalists and the freedom of the press are not only threatened in conflict zones, but potentially everywhere. Even in otherwise peaceful societies, we cannot take the freedom of the press for granted. We have to stand up for it and defend it everywhere and all the time. In this constant endeavour, an active and vibrant civil society is indispensable. We therefore appeal to all countries and regional organizations to create an environment where civil society can operate freely and to value the important role of the freedom of the press. Attacks against journalists are thus not only attacks against individuals, but they are also an attack against a linchpin of free and democratic societies. The Council may rest assured that the protection and promotion of the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech is and will always remain a top priority of Germany.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I would like to sincerely thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on the protection of journalists in conflicts.

Unfortunately, we have in the recent years witnessed many barbaric attacks against journalists and that number has not been decreasing. Therefore, we find it extremely important to give regular and more frequent attention to the issue at the Security Council. Estonia welcomes the adoption earlier today of resolution 2222 (2015) on the protection of journalists. We have proudly co-sponsored it and would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for all their hard work.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Estonia is a firm believer in the value of the freedom of expression and the freedom of speech. It is often through the tireless work of journalists on the frontline of the most dangerous conflicts that light is shed on the issues of most serious concern to the international community. On many occasions, the credible information provided by journalists, sometimes working under extreme duress and sacrificing their own well-being, can help save lives.

It has been said, at the outbreak of an armed conflict, that the first casualty is often the truth. Since nowadays information moves at the speed of light, it is of utmost importance to convey accurate and impartial media reports from conflict zones and to bring them to public attention as quickly as possible. But that often comes at a cost. Unfortunately, journalists, correspondents and media workers, especially those working in conflict zones, have become deliberate targets of brutal attacks — attacks that have exceeded any level of humanity. Journalists are humiliated, imprisoned, tortured, executed and murdered by their own Governments, parties to the conflict or terrorist organisations, whether through beheadings carried out by Daesh or executions organized by Al-Qaida. It can also happen in the peaceful office of a cartoon magazine as in the case of *Charlie Hebdo*.

Despite increased attention by the international community, there has been very little progress in limiting the number of journalists killed — 370 in the past 10 years — and in bringing the perpetrators to justice. Besides the threat to their lives, journalists also face other obstructions in their job at the conflict areas, such as denial to access, censorship and harassment, arbitrary detention and direct attacks.

International organizations, Governments, the media and other actors must work together to strengthen the safety of journalists and hold accountable those responsible for attacks. Given the existing international instruments, which include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Third Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol, resolution 1738 (2006) and many others, that necessary judicial framework should be sufficient to protect journalists even when they report from conflict zones. Yet, sadly, in almost all cases the perpetrators of crimes against journalists escape justice.

It is important to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law and to continue to recall that an attack against a journalist is an attack against a civilian and, regardless of whether it occurs in an international or non-international armed conflict, also amounts to a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In our view, tackling impunity and sentencing the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes against journalists should be the best possible deterrent for any future offenders. While we agree that the national Governments of countries in conflict should be the first in line to prosecute the perpetrators, we strongly encourage the Council to consider referring such cases to the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, Estonia, as a member of the UNESCO Executive Board, calls upon all relevant actors to support the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and urges the sharing of good practices on the safety of journalists.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Pyvovarov (Ukraine): I should like at the outset to express our gratitude to the Lithuanian presidency for holding this debate on the protection of journalists.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of the European Union on this matter.

My delegation welcomes draft resolution 2222 (2015), adopted today, and we are glad to have been one of the sponsors of this important document.

Today's subject is particularly sensitive for my country, which is now continuing to struggle against Russian hybrid aggression, and we are grateful for this opportunity to make some remarks that we deem important.

There is no doubt that today information has a direct impact on the principal global political processes. In the past two years, the world has witnessed a steady increase in the number of journalists killed or injured while performing their professional duties. Unfortunately, one of the main reasons for this unacceptable situation is the increase in the number of areas of instability, the imperfect nature of the existing international legal mechanisms to protect journalists, and the impunity of those who commit crimes and who hinder journalists' professional activities.

Ukraine believes that free, independent, responsible and professional journalism is the basis of modern civil democratic societies. My country supports all international mechanisms aimed at strengthening the protection of journalists throughout the world, particularly those promoted by the Human Rights Council. Ukraine is also actively engaged in UNESCO's work to strengthen the intergovernmental response to acts of violence and aggression against journalists working in areas of high risk and danger.

My country is a strong supporter of the comprehensive and practical implementation of the principles laid down in the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. We consider it to be a significant document for global counteraction against the impunity of persons and criminal entities who threaten media representatives directly in hot spots.

The strengthening of the professional activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide could also become an important element of the efforts aimed at a general improvement in the security of journalists. These NGOs should continue to draw Governments' attention to the shortcomings in existing practices of the physical and legal protection of media representatives. We believe that close cooperation among various governmental entities and NGOs could give a positive impetus, including with respect to a revision of the list of new areas of informational activity, where journalists should have the same rights as if they worked in zones of instability, for example in the blogosphere and for social media networks.

Ukraine strongly believes in the need to enhance international experts' efforts to upgrade the process of investigation and of holding accountable those who affect the legitimate rights of journalists who work in zones of instability.

We also pay tribute to those journalists who have died or been injured in the performance of their professional duties. Our country will remain an active supporter of free and secure journalism, and we consider the United Nations and its Security Council as the foremost actors in strengthening their basic rights and freedoms at the global level.

I am proud to say that in Ukraine, despite all of the internal difficulties we are being made to go through, an independent journalism that represents all existing opinions has become a reality. It now serves as a powerful tool for continuing democratic transformations in our society and reflects our people's current need to live in an atmosphere of freedom of speech and expression, to live in a country where one feels no threat of being imprisoned for one's position if it does not coincide with the official one.

Our independent national journalism has been one of the major factors that inspired a revolution of dignity more than one year ago. Because of the many impartial investigations carried out by Ukrainian media and courageous journalists, our society discovered all of the terrifying aspects of life under and the corruption of the previous pro-Russian regime. Ukrainian journalists became a real fourth branch of power and formed a strong public mechanism of control over our Government officials and politicians, leading to a more transparent and democratic public sector.

The Government of Ukraine and its competent agencies are doing their utmost to protect journalists. On 14 May, our Parliament adopted a law on amendments to certain legislative acts of Ukraine concerning the strengthening of guarantees for the lawful professional activities of journalists in Ukraine. This law envisages additional security guarantees for the lawful professional activities of journalists, including changes in Ukraine's criminal code. The law also provides for additional social guarantees for journalists and their families.

For more than a year, Ukraine has been suffering from the aggression of the Russian Federation, which has occupied part of our sovereign territory, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and continues its hostile military actions against my country in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

All of those factors have had a grave impact on journalists working in Ukraine, having increased the number of crimes against them to a level higher than it has ever been throughout the entire history of our independent country. Our own example has clearly shown to the entire world that information can be used not to promote democratic values and principles but as a method to inspire, fuel and maintain exported conflicts, to brainwash citizens on both sides of the border and to lie about the real reasons and consequences of this brazen military aggression at the very centre of Europe.

Since the beginning of the crisis, Ukrainians and the rest of the world have felt and seen the obvious distinction between independent international journalism and Russian propaganda-style production, with ridiculous theatrical television scenes made mostly for internal consumption. Such activities on the part of the Kremlin-controlled media directly violate the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, which was signed by Russia in 2006. That Convention is, unfortunately, yet another international document that that country simply ignores as if it did not exist.

The reports of all international monitoring missions convincingly and factually demonstrate that numerous cases of violence against members of the media continue to be committed by Russia-backed illegal armed groups in Donbas as well as by quasi-authorities exercising de facto control in the occupied Crimean peninsula.

Murder, physical assault, kidnapping, intimidation and threats against journalists are among the most grave human rights violations there. Moreover, the ongoing hostilities and violations of the ceasefire regime by militants in eastern Ukraine continue to jeopardize the safety of journalists in Donbas, where Ukrainian television channels were long ago illegally cut off and replaced by State propaganda television channels from the Russian Federation.

Against that backdrop, we continue to witness a real information war by the Russian State-controlled media aimed at destroying peace and stability in Ukraine. Anti-Ukrainian falsifications by the Russian media defy the norms of journalistic ethics and human morality, and crudely incite inter-ethnic hatred. The Russian State media are being widely utilized by the Russian Government to disseminate propaganda and violence and to promote aggressive nationalism and chauvinism, which runs counter to a number of United Nations Charter principles and commitments.

We emphasize that the overall media freedom situation in the affected regions of eastern Ukraine and the steps undertaken by the Ukrainian Government to protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms should be perceived against the backdrop of the security challenges stemming from the aggressive and subversive activities pursued by the Russian Federation towards Ukraine, including through support to illegal armed groups in eastern Ukraine. We strongly condemn all attacks against journalists in eastern Ukraine and worldwide and fully share the view that journalists' safety must be guaranteed at all times.

Finally, let me conclude by reiterating the Ukrainian Government's commitment to further safeguard and promote media freedom and the protection of journalists in the country, in full accordance with our international commitments and standards.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Lithuanian presidency for convening this timely debate.

Turkey aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. I will now make some further remarks in my national capacity.

Freedom of expression and of the media constitute vital foundations for democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. We must all ensure that that freedom is upheld. Journalists and media professionals carry out a particularly significant task in promptly delivering accurate and credible information, often from increasingly dangerous environments. In doing so, they increasingly face risks of intimidation and violence, especially in situations of armed conflict.

Regrettably, the growing threat to the safety of journalists in conflict situations has manifested itself in the form of killing, kidnapping and hostage-taking by various actors. The abhorrent acts perpetrated against journalists by terrorist organizations such as Daesh portray the gravity of the challenge at hand. Such acts systematically targeting journalists not only deserve every condemnation, but must also lead us all to take vigorous steps to prevent violence and promote a safe environment for journalists and other media professionals.

We believe that particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring accountability for crimes committed against journalists in armed conflicts. Impunity for such crimes remains a paramount challenge that needs to be addressed. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations, including the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, led by UNESCO. The General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have also focused on that issue through the adoption of annual resolutions on the safety of journalists and impunity. The initiatives of the Council of Europe are also noteworthy in that regard.

Peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as appropriate and relevant, could also play an important role in international efforts to promote and protect journalists and media professionals in conflict situations. In that framework, monitoring and reporting violations and abuses against journalists could contribute to international endeavours to end impunity.

Creating the necessary working environment for journalists and ensuring their access and freedom of movement are essential components for safeguarding the delivery of credible information to local populations as well as to the wider international community. Turkey hosts a significant number of international journalists covering conflict situations in our region. We facilitate their activities by providing a safe and secure environment in which to carry out their work. As a matter of fact, media centres established by Turkey close to some of its borders have enabled international journalists and media professionals to access information and to report without interruption in a safe setting in close proximity to conflict zones.

Let me conclude by underscoring that the international community should spare no effort to address the disturbing trend of intimidation and violence against journalists in conflict situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mrs. Hrdá (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency for bringing up this very important topic.

We echo the widely shared regret over the unacceptable and rising number of journalists who have been harassed, threatened, attacked and killed, whether by State or non-State actors. And we deplore the impunity that prevails for crimes against journalists, which engenders further violations. Working journalists today represent part of everyone's freedom of opinion and expression. They are the catalysts of the free flow of information and ideas — we all use the results of journalists' work. Far too often, those brave individuals continue to pay the highest price for making sure that human suffering in conflicts does not go unseen and unheard.

Journalists have the strength to bring perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses in remote areas of the world into broad daylight — suddenly, in the blink of an eye — through print, television or the Internet. Thanks to modern communication technologies, anyone who is brave enough can now become a citizen journalist, documenting human rights violations and abuses. And anyone can be targeted as such. The systematic and comprehensive work at the global and regional levels to raise awareness, set standards and share best practices must be met by the same resolve and commitment at the national level to reverse the entrenched impunity.

The Czech Republic supports, through concrete projects, the strengthening of democratic media and open, independent and professional journalism. In the course of the Universal Periodic Review we regularly raise the issue of the free and unhindered work of journalists, along with the rule of law, of which the safety of journalists must be an inherent part.

We welcome the shared examples of best practices for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of crimes against journalists. We hope that the concerted efforts rallying behind the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity will bear fruit, whether through UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe or other regional organizations. We owe it to the survivors of attacks and threats, the families of those killed and to journalists whose work will always remain the ultimate mirror of our democracies.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. De Antueno (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): As my delegation expressed when it was a member of the Security Council, the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict is an issue to which the international community accords considerable importance. It is therefore appropriate for the Council to keep it under continual review.

Civilians continue to suffer deeply the consequences of armed conflicts, in alarming figures, and the increasing attacks on journalists are grounds for clear concern. Allow me, therefore, to thank the Lithuanian presidency for bringing the issue of protecting journalists before the Council for the third time since 2006, when my country was also a member and when resolution 1738 (2006) was adopted. I would also like to express our gratitude for the concept note prepared by the presidency (S/2015/307, annex) and for the briefings by the journalists who are here with us today, who described how they conduct their work in situations of great danger.

Journalism is a fundamental tool for the exercise of freedom of the press and of information that becomes more critical in conflict and post-conflict situations, in which it helps to effectively expose grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In situations of armed conflict or their aftermath, the lives of journalists and other media workers may be in danger due to multiple factors, from attacks that target them deliberately because of their profession, to situations in which they are caught in crossfire. Journalists, like other civilians, are exposed to such dangers. But recently a new kind of violation of their physical integrity has made its appearance: deliberate attacks committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts — to which Argentina is a party — provides that journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians. That provision merely affirms the rule in customary international law whereby journalists have civilian status for the purposes of international humanitarian law. For the purposes of the protection provided by humanitarian law, including article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, relating to non-international armed conflicts, journalists and their assistants are therefore non-combatants and they and their equipment must be protected as such.

However, it is also important to combat impunity for attacks. In 2010, at its twenty-seventh session, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication asked UNESCO's Director General for an analytical report on the safety of journalists and impunity. That report, presented in March 2012, proposed a plan of action for the United Nations. We hope that the Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity will help to strengthen measures designed to protect journalists in conflict and post-conflict situations, and to reinforce the view that accountability is essential.

Those two concerns — about impunity and respect for international humanitarian law — are also reflected in the Human Rights Council's resolution 21/12, adopted in November 2012. The resolution, sponsored by more than 50 countries, including Argentina, firmly condemned all attacks and violence against journalists and expressed concern about the fact that such attacks too often go unpunished. Similarly, the General Assembly, in its resolution 68/163, proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, commemorated for the first time in 2014 and sponsored by Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, France, Greece, Tunisia and UNESCO.

The presidency's concept note (S/2015/307, annex) outlines an undeniable aspect of contemporary reality — that in some conflict situations there arise other acts of extreme violence, radicalized fundamentalism and a cruel and total disregard for human dignity of which journalists are often victims. And they make use of the advantages of our modern world to spread such horror virtually. While the international community has not yet arrived at a universally agreed-on definition of terrorism, we can still identify the acts that the international community should condemn. We therefore support the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as one of the most serious threats there is to international peace and security, human dignity, peaceful coexistence, the building of democracy and the economic and social development of nations.

It is precisely that reality that makes the challenge we face more serious, in part because the legal frameworks that apply to combatants in situations of armed conflict and in the fight against terrorism are different. It also makes it all the more critical from the perspective of effective protection, an issue raised in the presidency's concept note. The fact is that peacekeeping operations have specific mandates, and even when those mandates include the protection of civilians, giving priority to this particular category of civilians would require careful review by Member States. It would also mean incorporating the particular characteristics involved in combating terrorism into special political missions.

It is essential that the Security Council remain committed to protecting civilians in armed conflict, which should include the consideration of specific situations, such as that of journalists today, and to promoting respect for international humanitarian and human-rights law, as well as ending impunity for serious violations against civilians.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam President, as you approach the end of your presidency of the Council for this month, I would like to congratulate you on the success of your efforts.

We would like to highlight the various informal and formal meetings that have been held to bring about the adoption today of resolution 2222 (2015), which affirms the importance of protecting journalists in times of armed conflict. It is a positive step that should contribute to achieving such protection. The Council has held many meetings and issued numerous resolutions and presidential statements on the subject of the protection of civilians in armed conflict since the topic was first introduced in the Council, in 1999. However, they have not been implemented. The conflicts on the ground are still going on, and the numbers of victims, particularly women and children, continue to rise in places such as Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the occupied Palestinian territories. Disagreements between the Council's permanent members and their exercise of the right to the veto have continued to help worsen their plight and contribute to the incidence of serious violations of humanitarian law and human rights. That in turn has resulted in a huge humanitarian crisis in terms of internally displaced persons and refugees, now amounting to 50 million people, the highest number since the Second World War.

The issue of the protection of civilians is closely tied to the provision of humanitarian assistance, and United Nations agencies are therefore having to respond to calls for help in humanitarian crises all over the world. The international community in general, and the Security Council in particular, has failed to provide the necessary protection in these armed conflicts, helping to worsen the problems of civilians at a time when the parties to those conflicts are ignoring all their appeals and committing endless violations of international humanitarian law and so forth. That said, the current situation demands that we raise the awareness of all the parties to the various conflicts concerning human-rights violations and ensure accountability for such acts through international commissions of inquiry and special tribunals.

I would like to mention the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where Israel persists in its colonization policies and where human-rights violations continue. At the same time, since the conflict in Syria began, the people of Syria have been facing a humanitarian disaster that has claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people, including thousands of children, and has resulted in the displacement of 12 million as the crisis continues to worsen. Kuwait has held several international donor conferences at which a total of $6.6 billion has been pledged to help ease the Syrian people's suffering. In that regard, we reaffirm our support for the efforts of Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and the importance of finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and aimed at fulfilling the Syrian people's aspirations.

The events in Yemen threaten the security of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the wake of the acts perpetrated by the partisan forces of the country's former President Abdullah Saleh. Those groups want to take power and are completely ignoring resolution 2216 (2015). They have violated the humanitarian ceasefire, thereby furthering the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The unilateral measures taken by militias and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh that control parts of Yemen are hampering the political transition. In that regard, we reiterate our support for restoring peace and stability in Yemen.

In conclusion, my delegation emphasizes that the protection of civilians must not serve as a political tool. Impunity must not become a choice in the context of armed conflict. We therefore reiterate our support for United Nations efforts to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, particularly through peacekeeping missions, whose mandates and tasks must be clearly defined to ensure strengthened respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law. I also reiterate my country's support for international efforts aimed at strengthening the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this Security Council debate on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. We also commend the Council presidency for choosing this relevant topic, which requires further commitment on the part of the international community. The choice of theme is especially timely owing to the numerous armed conflicts that erupted during the past 10 years, where journalists have been victims of violence and unparalleled brutality.

In a report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights points out that countries experiencing or having experienced armed conflict are among the most dangerous in the world for journalists. The report indicated that, since 1992, at least 185 journalists have been killed while working in situations of armed conflict. That number rises to 1,000 dead since 1992 if we include the deaths that occurred outside of conflict zones.

Journalists have also suffered numerous violations of their rights as a result of their activities. They have often been kidnapped, tortured, imprisoned without trial and their equipment confiscated and destroyed, in addition to restrictions on their freedom of movement and opinion.

Journalists face extremely vulnerable situations in conflict zones; the recent barbaric execution of journalists by Daesh terrorists is the most blatant expression of such vulnerability. The targeting and execution of journalists and untoward media coverage carried out by the executioners notably demonstrate their goal of finding an audience to their atrocities and subjugating a frightened population through their commands. That bears witness to the important role of journalists in the worldwide exposure of the atrocities and violations of international law perpetrated in conflict zones.

While cases of foreign journalists killed or injured in conflict zones often capture the attention of the international community, most of the victims of threats and attacks are local journalists covering local issues. That is why we must redouble our efforts to protect journalists in conflict situations.

We all know that under international humanitarian law journalists should benefit from all of the protections afforded to civilians in times of conflict. However special attention and protection should be provided to journalists because of the nature of their work and their vulnerability.

Training should be made available to members of the armed forces and to organizations of journalists and media personnel on international law obligations applicable to armed conflict situations, journalists' legal right to be present in such situations and policies and procedures aimed at limiting risks for journalists. Cooperation among international and regional organizations and civil society aimed at providing such training could significantly improve that endeavour.

While the digital age has created unlimited opportunities for disseminating information, new forms of journalism have appeared that deserve the same protections as those accorded to journalists.

The issue of impunity for attacks against journalists also requires our further attention. Several reports on the subject indicate near total impunity in cases of violations of the right to life of journalists: in 9 out of 10 cases, the perpetrators go unpunished. Any violence committed against a journalist that goes unpunished opens the door to further violence. It is a serious and pervasive problem, as well as a major obstacle in the effort to protect journalists.

Morocco is seriously concerned about the recent attacks and violence committed against journalists and media professionals, particularly in situations of armed conflict. My country remains deeply concerned about all violations of human rights and abuses committed against journalists and affecting their security, in any manner, and vigorously condemns them.

Convinced that the freedom of expression is the primary and essential factor in the development of a democratic society and in guaranteeing greater protection, Morocco has committed to promoting the rights and protection of journalists. At the national level, Morocco is preparing to adopt a new generation of reforms of the press and media sector. That reform was developed in coordination with experts with a view to implementing the provisions of the new Moroccan Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of thought, opinion and expression in all its forms. It also guarantees the right of access to information and provides that freedom of the press cannot be limited by any form of prior censorship.

Internationally, Morocco has joined, since its launch in Geneva in September 2012, the core group established by Austria to address the safety of journalists. The group has carried out several initiatives in the Human Rights Council, including two resolutions and one decision, and the panel discussion held by the Council in September 2013, for the first time on that issue, and the reports by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the subject.

We hope that today's discussion will complement initiatives undertaken in other United Nations bodies and contribute to strengthening the protection of journalists, wherever they are, especially in conflict zones.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Mawe (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's debate on this important subject. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing and to record our appreciation to Christophe Deloire and Mariane Pearl, who today have provided important personal insights into this issue.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

Journalists are key cogs in the civil society machine, and a free media has been a powerful force for positive change and democratic transformation everywhere. However, at present we are witnessing unprecedented infringements on journalists' freedom to do their jobs. Being a journalist, particularly in conflict situations, has rarely been more dangerous.

Too many Governments continue to use repressive and out-dated laws to target individual journalists and activists. Intimidation and violence, assaults, arbitrary detention and even death are just some of the dangers faced by journalists. Where that occurs, basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly, have been violated. We need to take such violations very seriously, as they reflect and frequently foretell greater violations of human rights, ultimately leading, if unchecked, to outbreaks of conflict.

All States have a duty to respect, protect and promote human rights. It is crucial that journalists and other media actors, as part of civil society, have the space in which to do their jobs free from violence and intimidation. A free and independent media is indispensable for democracy.

Supporting civil society space has been one of Ireland's key commitments for our membership of the Human Rights Council. In the light of that, Ireland supported resolution 27/5, on the safety of journalists, adopted at the twenty-seventh session of the Council, last September. The resolution urges States to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently. Earlier, at the Council's twenty-fourth session, Ireland took the lead in presenting and negotiating resolution 24/21 — along with Chile, Japan, Sierra Leone and Tunisia — entitled "Civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment".

In those resolutions we remind States of their obligation to respect and fully protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all individuals, including the rights to the freedom of expression and opinion and to assemble peacefully and to associate freely, both online and offline. If those basic freedoms are respected, citizens can exercise their democratic rights, including that of dissent, and meaningfully contribute to the governance of their State.

Ireland's policy for international development, entitled One World, One Future, recognizes the powerful role that a diverse, pluralistic and professional media environment can have in providing access to information and debate and in ensuring the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression as recognized in international human rights law. The policy highlights the important contribution media can make in holding Governments and others to account and includes a commitment to support initiatives that can strengthen their role in key partner countries.

In Tanzania, for example, support is provided to the Tanzania Media Fund, which provides grants to media professionals and institutions in order to improve journalism standards, including investigative journalism. In Zambia, support is provided to the Media Institute of Southern Africa to support community radio stations, a source of over 80 per cent of Zambians' current affairs information and an important tool for enhancing domestic accountability.

The World Press Freedom Index reports that no journalists were killed in these countries in 2014. Other countries were not so safe, however, with 99 media personnel killed worldwide in 2014. If the general trend continues, all but nine of these crimes will go unpunished. This is not good enough, and Ireland underlines the need to end the widespread impunity associated with attacks on journalists. The investigation, prosecution, conviction and punishment of such attacks make an essential contribution to prevention by deterring would-be attackers. Unfortunately, attacks on journalists are often committed at the State's behest or with its tacit consent, exacerbating the problem of impunity.

Ireland is appalled by the terrorist attacks on freedom of speech, including the murder of journalists by groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham. There needs to be accountability for all such actions, including where necessary and appropriate through referral to the International Criminal Court. In Ireland's case, we are working closely with our partners in the EU and through the United Nations to coordinate our efforts and to strengthen the tools at our disposal.

In conclusion, Ireland joins with our EU colleagues in encouraging the Secretary-General to continue to include the issue of protection of journalists in armed conflicts in his reports on the protection of civilians. We also encourage the Security Council to address the protection of journalists, including through public statements, reporting requirements for peacekeeping missions and the strengthening of mandates.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Stener (Norway): Norway wants to thank the Lithuanian presidency for bringing this important issue back to the Council. Let me also thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing, and Mr. Deloire and Ms. Pearl for their testimonies this morning.

Freedom of expression is one of the most fundamental and important human rights. Regrettably, it is also one of the most threatened human rights. Safeguarding freedom of expression and freedom of the press is at the heart of Norway's human rights policy. Because of the increased pressure to these freedoms worldwide, we are currently working on a strategy to intensify our work in this field. A main priority for us is the safety and protection of journalists, with a special focus on women journalists and media workers. They are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence, and it is important to address the gender dimension of measures to ensure their safety.

Journalists go where most of us are unable or unwilling to go. They place themselves in dangerous situations in order to report independently, shed light on atrocities and expose violations of human rights. It is precisely because of this important eyewitness role that journalists and media workers are targeted in conflict situations. Although journalists operating in areas of armed conflict are protected as civilians under international humanitarian law, they are attacked for what they have written, silenced for what they have witnessed or kidnapped for the leverage and global attention their capture may provide.

The vast majority of attacks against journalists, however, occur outside situations of armed conflict. It is therefore vital that we protect journalists both in and outside of conflict. In the past 10 years, more than 700 journalists have been killed for simply doing their job. Nine out of ten cases go unpunished. Impunity is the greatest obstacle to ensuring the safety of journalists. Every act of violence that goes uninvestigated and unpunished is an open invitation for further violence.

Norway will continue to support the safety of journalists online and offline and work against impunity for perpetrators in accordance with the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Through the Norwegian Union of Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists and International Media Support, Norway supports the safety training of journalists and other media workers.

We must provide protection for journalists, and we must fight impunity for crimes committed against them. The international legal framework is in place, but the gap between the commitments States have made and the respect shown for human rights in practice is far too big. What we need is political will and implementation at the national level. States must ensure the safety of journalists also in conflict situations. They must investigate threats and attacks against journalists effectively and impartially.

No journalist anywhere should have to risk his or her life to report facts and news. We are therefore pleased to have co-sponsored resolution 2222 (2015), adopted this morning.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Montenegro.

Mr. Perović (Montenegro): We thank you, Madam President, for holding this important and timely debate today on the protection of journalist in conflict situations and commend Lithuania's strong commitment to this issue. We also thank today's briefers for their valuable statements.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like, however, to highlight some points of particular importance to my country.

When something such as the death of a journalist happens, people always ask what motivates journalists to risk their lives to tell the story. Journalists are in a position to experience world events first-hand and to make a difference. They help us understand what is happening around us.

Restrictions on media freedom deprive us of the information we need to engage in informed debates, assess our Governments' policies and practices, and hold them to account. That is particularly important in conflict areas, where access to information is challenging and often inconsistent. The protection of journalists is a building block of an open society and effective democracy. Journalists should have the freedom to report the news without fear of reprisal or being targeted as criminals. However, much remains to be done in this regard, and unfortunately journalists, human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations promoting freedom of expression continue to face significant danger in conflict zones and around the world.

Journalists and media workers are subjected to physical violence and assault, abduction and disappearances, threats, intimidation and harassment. For many countries around the world, murder is the most brutal form of censorship. We express concern regarding and condemn the killings of journalists in the line of duty. We also welcome the press statements issued by the Security Council in response to such killings.

Montenegro is deeply committed to the protection of civilians in conflict situations, including the protection of journalists, and fully supports resolution 1738 (2006) and presidential statement S/PRST/2013/2, adopted in February 2013. During armed conflict, journalists, media professionals and associated personnel should be considered as civilians and respected and protected as such under relevant international law.

Today, we are all witnessing rising number of killings and increasing risks and threats to journalists and media workers. At the same time, there is a significant increase in the international awareness of this issue. Parties to an armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians. They should prevent abuses against journalists and respect their professional independence and rights, as they are risking their lives to bring the public an independent and professional view of what is really happening in the area of conflict.

The culture of impunity surrounding violence against journalists must end. We should keep in mind that every act of violence that goes unpunished or uninvestigated is an open invitation for further violence. Therefore, States should ensure that there are adequate and effective mechanisms to bring to justice those responsible for crimes against journalists, which are violations of international law.

The efforts of the international community to prevent and reduce risks and threats to journalists and media workers must be strengthened. We strongly support the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which helps States to develop legislation and mechanisms to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in both conflict and non-conflict situations. We encourage all Member States to work together with the United Nations to implement its provisions. Also, we encourage greater consistency at the country-level in implementing safety measures and emphasize the importance in achieving awareness of the Plan of Action among United Nations entities and Member States.

Given the critical importance of the freedom of the press, we must continue to take steps to protect journalists and enable them to report. We should not allow the further erosion of freedom of expression, as it constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and one of the basic conditions for its progress and the development of every man. Protecting journalists is a vital part of the Security Council's work, and the adoption of today's resolution is an important step in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Emiliou (Cyprus): As one of the last speakers of the day, Madam President, allow me to commend you on your exceptional stamina and patience. We also wish to thank the Lithuanian presidency for convening this important and timely debate, as well as to congratulate it on the unanimous adoption of today's resolution 2222 (2015), which condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists and strongly deplores impunity for such acts. I would also like to welcome and thank the journalists who came here today to share with us their own personal experiences.

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

We recall that the call for freedom of information came in one of the very first resolutions of the General Assembly. Freedom of information is a fundamental human right, a cornerstone of all the freedoms and values promoted and defended by the United Nations. It is guaranteed by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and constitutes an essential pillar of any healthy society. The freedom of the press is also enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, in which article 10 provides that

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers."

It is therefore incumbent upon all Governments to respect the right of individuals to hold opinions without interference, and the freedom of the press to collect, distribute, analyze and disseminate information without any kind of interference or fear of violence or persecution. It is impossible to have a genuinely democratic society without freedom of the media. As journalists continue to be imprisoned and killed in the four corners of the globe, it is important to recommit ourselves to this very basic freedom and to foster an independent and pluralistic media, which is prerequisite to democracy, peace and development. As the Secretary-General states in his synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda,

> "Press freedom and access to information, freedom of expression, assembly and association are enablers of sustainable development." (*A/69/700, para. 79*)

The year 2014 was yet another deadly one for journalists around the world. As reported by the Committee to Protect Journalists, a total of 60 journalists were killed globally in relation to their work, with an unusual proportion of those killed being members of the international press who had crossed borders to cover conflicts and dangerous situations all over the world. It is indicated that, reflecting the increasingly volatile nature of conflict zones in which journalists are often deliberately targeted, nearly one quarter of those killed that year were members of the international press, which is double the proportion reported in recent years. The majority of the victims, however, still remain local press covering local stories. About 68 per cent of the journalists killed in 2014 covered politics, with the next deadliest beat for reporters being war, at 60 per cent, followed by human rights, at 55 per cent.

The horrific terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the barbaric beheadings of journalists by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, and the journalists killed while trying to cover a story in a conflict zones show that the threat to journalists and free expression is not an isolated phenomenon but a global one and that, indeed, no place is really safe. It is for this reason that Governments should redouble their efforts and take measures that aim at preventing violence and promoting a safe environment for journalists, in order that they can perform their duties freely and without fear. Attacks against the press should be met with zero tolerance. All acts against the freedom of the media must be investigated swiftly, and the perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice. It is unacceptable that the majority of assassinations of journalists have yet to be properly investigated and punished.

The United Nations, as the embodiment of our fundamental freedoms, values and principles, can also play its part in the global efforts to promote the protection of journalists, freedom of the press and putting an end to the regime of quasi-impunity for the perpetrators of acts of violence against journalists. In that regard, the important role of the Security Council is especially important in engaging actively and standing up against the suppression of the freedom of the media wherever and whenever it occurs.

In conclusion, allow me to say that my country joins with all those who fight for the prevalence of the freedom of the press, for pluralism and unhindered access to information and for protecting journalists and their work globally. It is high time to move away from theoretical declarations and to engage in concrete actions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Gharibi (Islamic Republic of Iran): It is regrettable that the representative of the Israeli regime misused the Council's time to raise issues irrelevant to the important theme of today's debate, just for the political purpose of defamation of other countries. However, it is a thread-bare tactic, practiced by an apartheid occupier who has no respect for international humanitarian law. It accuses others to clearly divert attention. The international community well remembers how its reckless military machine massacred innocent civilians, including a huge number of women and children in Gaza less than a year ago — and not for the first time.

Aware of the influence of media and to cover up the atrocities, the aggressors concluded that journalists and media workers should not be allowed any access to conflict zones. But they went far beyond that. According to available statistics, more than a dozen Palestinian journalists were deliberately targeted and killed. That is in addition of the high number of journalists who were injured or arrested illegally and kept under cruel conditions. In the digital age, however, it is hard to hide bloody hands. It is time to demand accountability and end impunity.

The President: I understand that several delegations have requested the floor to make additional statements. It is my intention to accede to those requests. However, I kindly ask all delegations concerned to limit themselves to one additional statement, given the lateness of the hour.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Madam, for giving me the floor. We entirely reject the false allegations and fallacious references made by today by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic about my country. He failed in his attempt to distract the attention of the international community from the practices of the Syrian regime against its own people in all sectors of society. The regime is seeking to shirk its own ethical and legal responsibilities under international humanitarian law to protect Syrian civilians and journalists and to prevent journalists from being attacked and targeted.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I must agree that the situation with regard to the protection of journalists in Ukraine has become especially harsh due to the military operation launched over a year ago by the Kyiv authorities against regions that refute their policies. This has led to casualties among journalists, as a result of which Ukraine is one of the leaders in the sad index of journalists' death, with six journalists killed there in 2014.

The majority of those killed were Russian media personnel, including Anton Valoshin and Igor

Kornelyuk, reporters of the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company; Anatoli Klyan, a cameraman from Channel One; and Andrey Stenin, a photojournalist from the international information agency Russia Today. Already this year, several Russian journalists working in Ukraine have been cruelly attacked. Correspondents, including women — whose special protection is addressed in resolution 2222 (2015), adopted today — have been subject to assault and insult, and their lives and well-being have been threatened.

In recent months, the Ukrainian authorities have set up significant obstacles to the professional activities of a number of Russian journalists, including Zhanna Karpenko, Alexandra Ulyanova, Elizaveta Khramtsova, Natalya Kalisheva, Yelena Makarova, Sergey Korenev and Andrei Grigoryev. Oleg Sidyakin and Marat Saichenko from LifeNews, Andrei Suchenkov, Anton Malyshev, Yevgeny Davydov and Nikita Konashenkov, all working for the Zvezda television channel, have been seized by the Ukrainian military.

Since the launch of the campaign against the Russian media, some 50 Russian reporters have been deported from Ukraine under political pretexts. A decision was taken recently to deny media accreditation of Russian media personnel to governmental bodies. The so-called black list compiled by the Ukrainian security service permits the denial of accreditation and repressive measures to be taken against the representatives of any Russian mass medium.

The aforementioned facts — and the list could easily be extended — attest to Ukraine's violation of its international obligation not only to protect journalists but also to uphold freedom of speech. We urge the prompt adoption of measures to remedy the situation and to hold to account those responsible for the information war and the dissemination of propaganda. This includes any and all information on the conflict that does not jibe with the official line.

The very first initiative of the Ministry of Information Policy established this year in Ukraine was to create so-called information troops. The Ministry's website has posted a call for enlistment in those troops, whose task is to ensure the optimum dissemination on the Internet and social media of information and assessments that suit the Kyiv authorities. I urge members to judge for themselves whether this is about independent journalism, as claimed by the Ukrainian representative, or an organized information war.

The President: I call on the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shilo (Israel): It is truly absurd to hear a representative of one of the world's most oppressive tyrannies lecture the Middle East's only true democracy about the freedom of the press and the protection of journalists. It is really absurd. Instead of tackling the profound issue at hand — the protection of journalists — they have chosen to make baseless accusations against Israel and have politicized this debate.

It would be more productive to focus on the reasons and roots of the repression, torture and murder of journalists. Everybody knows that many people have suffered under repressive regimes like Iran's, which have abolished the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press, which are pillars of every democracy, like Israel's, as Council members know. In Iran, dozens of journalists and bloggers have been arrested. According to recent reports, at least 30 journalists are under arrest simply for telling the truth about the regime.

It is absurd that such a repressive regime has the audacity to attack Israel. Let us instead explore ways to create the tools and mechanisms needed to stop that horrendous repression and secure a free press. This Chamber, we believe, provides the appropriate forum to determine tangible and practical means to change that disturbing reality.

The President: I call on the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Pyvovarov (Ukraine): With over 300 deaths and disappearances of journalists since 1993 in Russia, where in most cases the perpetrators have not been brought to justice, the Russian Federation remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and European region, with the highest number of journalists brutally attacked and killed in the past 15 years.

The few Russian journalists and media outlets that attempt to object to the reporting on events in eastern Ukraine are attacked, harassed and threatened. Moreover, the Russian authorities continue to impose severe legislative restrictions that negatively affect media plurality and threaten the free flow of information, despite numerous warnings of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Among those are amendments to Russia's criminal code that further increase Government control of the Internet, amendments to the law on advertising that lead to undue media concentration in the hands of a few monopolies, and amendments to the law on mass media, lowering foreign ownership shares in media outlets to 20 per cent. We invite the Security Council to pay due attention to those issues threatening the freedom of the media in Russia and beyond.

This Chamber, in which more than 30 meetings have been dedicated to the situation in eastern Ukraine, has heard a lot of Soviet-style propaganda clichés from Russian representatives Some have been pure lies; some have even been funny. But all of them have been unreal and taken, as we see it, from a parallel reality. I should simply like to ask my Russian colleague whether he himself believes in what he says. For all the civilized world, Russia's direct participation in fuelling and creating the Ukrainian crisis is a fact — a proven, pure and obvious fact.

I will not comment on all that we have heard from our Russian colleague, because we hear the same thing at every single meeting on Ukraine. We are of the impression that the Russian delegation thinks that the more it repeats its lies about the crisis in Donbas that Russia has created, the greater will be its opportunities to convince the world that all Russian tanks, weapons, and militants, as well as the hundreds of dead and living, captured soldiers from the Russian army, are nothing more than the kind of fiction produced by Russia-24 or Russia Today.

In this case, I would tell the Russian representative,

"Do not waste your time. You should direct your massive, vibrant energy into resolving the huge number of problems in your own country. Simply get out of my land and let us and all of Europe live in peace."

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7451

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7451st meeting

Thursday, 28 May 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Gee
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2015/296)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2015/296)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/380, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Lithuania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2015/296, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2223 (2015).

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7452

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7452nd meeting

Thursday, 28 May 2015, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Ried
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/368)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/368)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/368, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

Before giving the floor to Ms. Amos, I would like to take this opportunity, since this will be her final briefing to the Council as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to thank her for her exceptional service. The Council wishes her every success in her future endeavours.

I now give the floor to Ms. Amos.

Ms. Amos: As this is my last briefing to the Council, it is many ways fitting that it is on Syria, as during my time as Emergency Relief Coordinator it is this crisis that has taken more of my time and attention, and those of this Council, than any other crisis in the world. It is the Syria crisis and its consequences that have led me to the belief that the Council and the international community more broadly, needs to do more to protect civilians and ensure greater accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

I have been proud to serve in the United Nations as I have a strong belief in the values of the Organization and the principles underpinning the Charter, and feel that in today's unpredictable and deeply troubled world, we need the United Nations more than ever. As I have watched the huge rise in the number of people around the world affected by conflict and natural disasters — an estimated 70 million in 2010, when I started, and 114 million today — it is clear that there needs to be a major rethink of humanitarian response efforts — who does what, who pays for it and greater investment in conflict prevention, disaster preparedness, peace and State-building.

In my time in this role, I have seen the very worst of what people are capable of and also the very best of humanity — the countless Syrians who, despite the gravity of their situation, have not given up hope and refuse to buy into the rhetoric that the country's problems can be solved through violence. It is found in the bonds forged between strangers who do everything they can to help their fellow countrymen and women survive. It is reflected in the generosity of families in Syria and neighbouring countries sheltering, feeding and clothing the displaced without asking anything in return.

It is embodied in the staff and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the first responders and the staff of hospitals and clinics throughout the country who do not let narrow political interest cloud their commitment to doing everything they can to safeguard the well-being of ordinary Syrians. And it is demonstrated in the thousands of staff of the United Nations on the ground who carry out their duties day in and day out, despite petty political pressure and, in some cases, violence and intimidation from the parties to the conflict.

For more than four years, we have watched Syria descend into deeper depths of despair, surpassing what even the most pessimistic observers thought possible. The situation throughout the country is by any measure extremely grave and deteriorating by the day. In the past weeks, we have seen more and more heinous acts, and innocent men, women and children killed, maimed, displaced and subjected to a savagery that no human should have to endure. For example, at the end of April, a market in Darkoush, in rural Idlib, was subjected to aerial bombing that killed between 40 and 50 people and wounding over 100 civilians. The same market was again hit last week, with reports of 20 more people being killed. Reports have emerged of the killing of civilians by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) following its capture of Palmyra in the past week. Such blatant disregard for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law — the distinction between civilians and combatants — must be condemned in the strongest terms.

In February of last year, the Council came together to adopt resolution 2139 (2014). It was clear in what it demanded of the parties — that they end the violence, comply with international law, and ensure that obligations to facilitate humanitarian access to people in need were met. Yet, for the past 15 months, the Secretary-General has systematically reported on the continued non-compliance with the Council's demands. While the cross-border deliveries enabled by resolutions 2165 (2014) (2014) and 2191 (2014) have allowed the United Nations to extend its reach and complement the enormous efforts of our NGO partners, the parties to the conflict have ignored practically all aspects of the resolution.

The use of chlorine continues to be reported, killing, injuring and terrorizing civilians. Indiscriminate attacks, although prohibited by international humanitarian law, continue with no regard for the protection of civilians. Schools and hospitals continue to be attacked. Physicians for Human Rights recorded more attacks on medical facilities in April than it had in any month since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014). Some 422,000 people — nearly twice the number as when resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted — are under siege. If I had reported this at the beginning of the conflict, I am sure that Council members would not have believed it possible; today, we take it for granted. The United Nations and our partners were not able to reach any besieged locations in April.

People are trying to survive day by day without the basic necessities of life, such as water and electricity, and parties to the conflict continue to cut services, collectively punishing entire villages and cities in the process. Restrictions on the delivery of aid continue. The Government's introduction of new rules and regulations, which result in delays and distractions, are preventing us from delivering assistance, including surgical supplies, to people in desperate need. Of the 48 inter-agency convoys requests submitted since December, 5 have been completed, 9 have been approved in principle by the Government of Syria and are at various stages of preparations, and a further 11 have been put on hold due to insecurity. Nineteen more are awaiting a reply.

ISIL's advance brings with it new depths of depravity to Syria, with indiscriminate killing and maiming, raping and destroying. It has forcibly recruited children and made the delivery of humanitarian assistance more and more difficult in areas under its control. In addition to the restriction of operations to deliver food and other supplies, aid workers have been prevented from vaccinating children in areas of the country under their control.

Today, more than 12.2 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in Syria — an increase of almost one third compared to when resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted. Many of those who were previously able to care for themselves are now in need of help. Fewer than half of the country's hospitals are fully functioning. Two million children in Syria are out of school. The social, economic and human costs of this tragedy are profound. It may take generations for Syria to recover. An additional 540,000 people have been displaced this year alone, adding to the 7.6 million already displaced. Another nearly 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, placing host countries and communities under unbearable pressure. I thank Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for their significant efforts in this regard. Desperation means that more and more people are prepared to make the perilous journey to Europe by sea.

The Security Council can demonstrate its leadership and uphold its responsibility for international peace and security by taking the following measures.

First, it should ensure the protection of civilians. Secondly, it should ensure that the parties to the conflict abide by their international legal obligations and Security Council resolutions to facilitate humanitarian access to all people in need throughout the country, without discrimination. Thirdly, it should bring an end to the sieges, which collectively punish people. Fourthly, it should consider all possible avenues to ensure accountability, thereby sending a clear message to those responsible for violations of international law, as well as their victims, that the international community will not tolerate such action in Syria or elsewhere. Fifthly, it should step up financial support for the humanitarian response effort; and, sixthly, it should respect the non-political nature of humanitarian aid and give aid workers the space they need to carry out their work free of political pressure.

I know that there are no easy answers or quick fixes. But I also know that we cannot let the difficulties prevent us from upholding our responsibility to act on behalf of the people of Syria. We cannot leave Syrians abandoned to hopelessness and further despair. The Security Council is entrusted with considerable power and responsibility. For the sake of Syria and its future generations, the Council must set aside its political differences and come together to find a solution to what appear to be intractable problems. We saw in the adoption of resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) what can be done when the Council acts together and speaks with one voice. I very much hope it happens again.

The President: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting on the humanitarian situation in my country.

We have repeatedly stated in this Chamber and beyond that the humanitarian crisis in Syria cannot end if we do not deal with the root of the problem, which is the spread of foreign-backed terrorism. That has to accompany a Syrian-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership, without foreign intervention. That is the substance of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), Kofi Annan's six-point plan and what we achieved at the Geneva II talks, as well as the first and second Moscow conferences. It is the only serious path to ending what is called the crisis in Syria and to improving the humanitarian situation in a tangible, genuine and sustainable manner.

The people's suffering cannot be completely alleviated simply by providing some humanitarian aid in one region or another, although we are fully aware of the importance of providing such assistance and of alleviating the suffering in the areas concerned. Recent developments have proved us right, since despite the fact that six humanitarian response plans were adopted in cooperation with the Syrian Government, taken all together they have still been unable to end the humanitarian crisis. In fact, we have seen new humanitarian crises develop in some previously safe areas in the wake of the incursions by some terrorist groups, such as we have seen in Palmyra, Idlib, Jisr Al-Shughur and today in the city of Ariha, in Idlib. That has resulted in the killing or displacement of a large number of innocent Syrians and robbed them of their livelihoods and dignity. It confirms once again that the humanitarian crisis, including the issues of internal displacement and refugees, has occurred only in areas entered by armed terrorist organizations.

It is therefore crucial that the Security Council's resolutions on fighting terrorism be implemented, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), along with resolution 1624 (2005), which prohibits incitement to terrorism, and that they be implemented in full cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government. That would put an end to the alliance between Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia that supports, finances and arms the terrorist groups and which is supported politically and in the media by its paymasters and foreign sponsors.

But the problem is that some influential States are not serious about fighting terrorism, especially terrorism as it is practised by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and organizations affiliated with it. That is used by some countries to exert pressure to prevent any coordination between Syria and Iraq in fighting ISIS. That policy was made manifest this morning when the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/281, on saving Iraqi artifacts. Syria was a sponsor of that resolution. However, Western countries threatened Iraq by saying that if Syrian artifacts were mentioned the draft resolution would not be adopted — as if Iraqi heritage were different from Syrian heritage, or ISIS in Syria were different from ISIS in Iraq, and as if those benefiting were two separate parties with no affiliation with each other.

That general problem is also confirmed by the fact that ISIS continues to obtain weapons and attract new recruits to its ranks. The percentage of foreign fighters in ISIS increased to 70 per cent after the adoption of resolution 2178 (2014). That was also the testimony of the Security Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004). In paragraph 33 of its recent report on foreign terrorist fighters (S/2015/358), the Monitoring Team, the Council's own experts, confirmed that the primary movement routes of foreign terrorists into Syria and Iraq ran through Turkey and, to a lesser degree, Jordan and Lebanon.

Many Council member States often affirm, both inside and outside the Council — as do the Secretary-General and the senior staff of the Secretariat — that the only possible solution to the crisis in Syria is a political rather than a military one. However, it is obvious that this is simply a slogan for political and media consumption.

How can we speak of a political solution when, as we heard only a few days ago, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs states that his country has an agreement with the United States to provide air support to terrorist groups in Syria? How can they claim to be rejecting a military solution when they are providing support to terrorists and opening training camps for them in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, in the name of a moderate Syrian armed opposition? However, the real question we have for those States and for their representatives in this Chamber is this: Where is that moderate armed opposition on the map of Syria? Is it in Palmyra, in Idlib, in Jisr Al-Shughur or Derizor? Or maybe in Qalamoun, on our border with Lebanon? And what is the fate of the weapons and funds supplied to that moderate armed opposition?

It is no longer possible to continue misleading, defrauding and hiding behind the slogan of a moderate armed opposition in order to justify supporting terrorism. How can Chechen, Australian, British, French, Moroccan and Libyan citizens be part of a moderate Syrian opposition? It is very simple. Things have become crystal clear. There is no lawful terrorism and sinful terrorism — no halal and haram — just as there is no moderate and extremist terrorism. There are terrorist movements on the ground committing atrocious crimes with the support or acquiescence of some influential countries within and outside the Council. There is ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups that are allied with those two organizations and cooperate and work with them.

Was it not ISIS that stormed Palmyra? Was it not the Al-Nusra Front that stormed Idlib and Jisr Al-Shughur recently, and the town of Ariha today, using the name Jaish Al-Fatah? Of course, before it was the Jaish Al-Fatah it was known as the Al-Shamiya Front. And before that, it was known as the Syrian Front, the Syrian Revolutionaries, the Hazam Movement, and so on as in a Hollywood series in which we see one episode after another.

Did not the Qatari Al-Jazeera television channel yesterday invite Al-Julani, the commander of the terrorist Al-Nusra Front, so that he could inform us that there is now sharia law in Syria, and so that Qatar, in turn, could inform us in that interview that the terrorist Al-Nusra Front is a form of moderate terrorism that can be "laundered" just as mafia gangs launder dirty money? And after all that, there are still people who speak of a moderate armed opposition. Tomorrow we shall observe some people saying that the Security Council must remove the Al-Nusra Front from the lists of terrorist entities. I wager before all of you that this will happen soon.

Once again, the latest report (S/2015/368) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) contains many omissions and serious errors. Today we sent two identical letters to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General in that regard. However, I shall only mention here that all the allegations contained in the report against the Syrian Government are based on undisclosed sources. The report uses the term "reportedly" 15 times when allegations were made against the Syrian Government, but no information is provided regarding the source of those reports or their credibility.

Even worse, the report goes further than that and makes allegations against the Syrian Government, including that it uses so-called barrel bombs, without even once using the term "reportedly", as if that matter was a proven fact. That is exactly what happened with regard to crimes in which terrorists, aided by Turkey, used chemical substances in Khan Al-Assel and other localities, and when chlorine gas and sarin gas were used in other areas. How can reports by the Secretary-General make allegations against the Government of a State Member of the United Nations without basing them on reliable sources and without reading, taking note of or referring to the reports, letters, evidence and statements submitted by the Syrian Government during the past four years? This is a very serious precedent that will undermine what remains of the credibility of the Secretariat in its handling of humanitarian issues in Syria, unless it takes the credible and rapid action required to avoid such a situation.

I should also like to draw attention to the fact that the report fails to mention that the Turkish Government has allowed thousands of trucks to enter Syria illegally through checkpoints used by United Nations convoys bringing in humanitarian aid, and has used them to transport terrorists, weapons and dangerous materials to armed terrorist groups in Syria. That has endangered the United Nations convoys themselves — as we warned Ms. Amos when she asked the Security Council to adopt resolutions 2165 (2014).

Furthermore, the unilateral economic measures imposed on the Syrian people are yet another cause of their humanitarian suffering. Those unjust and illegal measures must therefore be lifted and the funding gap for humanitarian activities in Syria addressed. Only 17 per cent of the funding required for the 2015 Strategic Response Plan has been raised. This proves, once again, that certain countries, including, first and foremost, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and certain Western countries, only want to use the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a way to traffic commodities, as a means of political extortion and to further their own interventionist agendas.

The Syrian Government has cooperated with the United Nations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to all civilians. On 9 April, it agreed to most of the requests made by the United Nations and other international organizations to ensure the provision of aid to certain unstable areas. As of 27 May, that is to say as of yesterday, even though the Syrian Government has granted permission for joint United Nations agency convoys to transport humanitarian assistance to difficult-to-reach or unstable areas, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has been able to provide only 30 per cent of what has been authorized. The Syrian Government is, moreover, now considering requests for permission to be granted for more joint convoys.

Let me say onne final word. I hope this was a problem of interpretation, but while she was addressing the Council, I heard the Under-Secretary-General say "on behalf of the Syrian people". This is what the interpreter said. On behalf of my Government, I cannot allow the Under-Secretary-General to address the Council saying that she is speaking on behalf of the Syrian people. She is a representative of the Secretariat and this international Organization. This oversteps her mandate and the functions of Secretariat staff members. She is not Syrian and she has no post in Syria that allows her to speak on behalf of the Syrian people.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussions on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.